

Bridgend SINC Survey

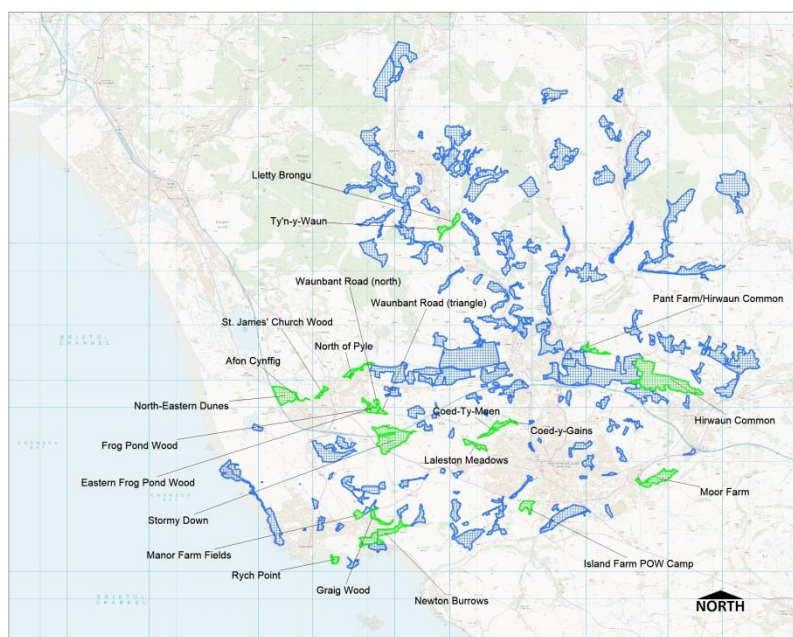
Survey and Report undertaken by
The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales



South and West Wales
De a Gorllewin Cymru

On Behalf of Bridgend Council

Survey Date: October 2019 - March 2020



Bridgend SINC Survey

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1. Introduction

1.1. About the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW)

WTSWW is one of 46 independent local charities that co-operate across the whole of the UK and are known collectively as *the Wildlife Trusts*. In Wales, five Wildlife Trusts work together to form Wildlife Trusts Wales, enabling us to work at both a local and national level to deliver nature conservation for people and wildlife.

WTSWW has a vision of an environment rich in wildlife for everyone and aims to rebuild biodiversity by engaging people with their environment. To do this WTSWW has four main objectives, which it hopes to deliver with key partners. The objectives are:

1. To stand up for wildlife and the environment
2. To create and enhance wildlife havens
3. To inspire people about the natural world
4. To foster sustainable living

1.2. Project History

In 2013, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) adopted its Local Development Plan (LDP), outlining key housing, social, economic and environmental objectives and strategies for the 2006–2021 plan period. Bridgend’s LDP is currently under review, with a new LDP anticipated to plan for the next fifteen years. To inform its new LDP, BCBC is seeking to commission consultants to undertake a SINC review of potential site allocations covering the 2018–2033 plan period, The project is focussing primarily on those SINC potentially impacted by new site allocations; the list being supplied by BCBC.

1.3. Project Brief

- Establish contact with as many landowners as possible (22 High Priority SINC previously identified by BCBC)
- Speak to them about the value of their site and agree access
- Carry out a basic walkover survey
- Provide broad condition assessment of habitat present
- Make some basic management recommendations and identify threats and opportunities where possible

1.4 Project Methods

The initial stage was to review the previous SINC surveys (2011) in order to assess which of the sites had landowner information. Where this information was available attempts were made to contact them in order to establish whether they were still the landowners and, if so, whether they were aware that the land in question was a SINC. This initial meeting was also intended to find out what management was being undertaken. A visit in person was prioritised over phone calls as previous experience has found that it is easier to explain location of fields and engage interest in the project to people who are unaware of the SINC system in person.

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Where there was no landowner information or the listed landowner was not correct then attempts were made to identify the relevant people by using Land Registry searches in tandem with visiting residences in close proximity to the SINC.

Once landowner information had been ascertained basic walkovers were carried out during January/February/March; due to the time of year botanical species identification was not carried out but used to give a general assessment of the current management routines and requirement for further surveys. A list of fauna seen or heard at each site was recorded.

Where landowners could not be identified or located prior to a visit public footpaths were used to access the sites to ensure that the maximum opportunity for visits was undertaken in the timeframe/budget. If no public footpaths were present then the site was viewed from adjacent land where possible.

2. Site Information and Survey Summaries

2.1. Site Ownership Table

SINC name	Landowner details	Source	Contacted?	Notes	Aware of SINC?
Afon Cynffig	William Richard Morgan & Amanda Jane Morgan, Marlas Farm, Pyle, Bridgend. CF33 4PE.	Land registry	Not yet	Coronavirus struck before visit was organised	NA
Coed-Ty-Maen	Magalie Muriel Boland, 2 Hickman Road, Penarth. CF64 2AJ.	Land registry	No	Warned off contacting them by adjacent landowners	NA
Coed-Y-Gains	Madeleine Seymour Boland, Llangwydd Court Farm, Laleston. CF32 0ET.	Land registry	No	As above	NA
Eastern Frog Pond Wood	John & Martine Flint, Woodland Lodge, Waunbant Road, Kenfig Hill. CF33 6FF. 07968 044487/07581 428173	Previous survey	Yes	Showed us round	No – aware of SSSI
	Marie Goldsworthy, Penycastell, Kenfig Hill. 07795 432176	Adjacent landowner (John & Martine Flint)	No	Only owns land that is also SSSI	NA
Frog Pond Wood	BCBC	NA	NA	NA	NA
Graig Wood	William & Christine Eynon, Tusker House, Newton, Porthcawl. CF36 5ST.	Land registry	Yes	Groundsman showed us round	No
Hirwaun Common	Common land	NA	NA	NA	NA
Island Farm POW Camp	BCBC	NA	NA	NA	NA
Laleston Meadows	David Howell George Thomas, Tynywaun Farm, Heol-Y-Cyw, Bridgend. CF35 6NL.	Land registry	No – coronavirus struck before planned visit	Western field	NA
	Elizabeth Kay Crabb, Stonebridge Green	Land registry	No – not local	Eastern Fields	NA



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	Cottage, Stonebridge Green Rad, Egerton, Ashford, Kent. TN27 9AP.				
	Richard Hartley Phipps, Woodland House, Doctors Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham. RG18 9TA.	Land registry	No – not local	Eastern Fields	NA
	Matthew Llewellyn Phipps, Beech Cottage, Draethen, Newport. NP10 8GB.	Land registry	No – not local	Eastern Fields	NA
Llety Brongu	Elizabeth Jones, 5 Argyll Street, East Malvern, 3145, Melbourne, Australia.	Land registry	No – not local	Mr Garfield (Ty'n-Y-Waun) is the tenant	NA
	Ann Louise Mary Allport, Little Manor House, Witheridge Hill, Highmoor, Henley-on-Thames. RG9 5PE.	Land registry	No – not local	Mr Garfield (Ty'n-Y-Waun) is the tenant	NA
	Ian Morgan Nicholas, 16 Stafford Avenue, Shifnal. TF11 9AL.	Land registry	No – not local	Mr Garfield (Ty'n-Y-Waun) is the tenant	NA
Manor Farm Fields	Peter Scott	Adjacent landowner	No	No address given but is apparently 'son of Scott Waste'	NA
Moor Farm	Common land	NA	NA	NA	NA
	'Glyn', Moor Farm, Coychurch.	Adjacent landowner	Yes	Owens 2 parcels	No
Newton Burrows	Overseas owner. Contact Watts and Morgan (FAO Hopkin Joseph)	Land registry	Yes	Land registry gave Hopkin Joseph as owner.	NA
North Eastern Dunes	Unknown	Previous survey	Yes	Previously listed owner is incorrect (Thomas Anthony)	NA
North of Pyle	Vernon Hearse, 15 Swynyrafon, Kenfig Hill.	Address from previous survey	Yes	New owner since previous survey	No – aware of protection (?) for coke



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					ovens
Pant Farm/Hirwaun Common	BCBC and common land	Previous survey	NA	NA	NA
Rych Point	None	NA	NA	No landowner on land registry	NA
St. James' Church Wood	Pyle Community Council, The Talbot Institute, 6 Prince Road, Kenfig Hill, Bridgend. CF33 6ED.	Land registry	No	NA	NA
Stormy Down	Hobbs Properties Ltd., Backwell House, Flax Bourton, Bristol.	Land registry	No	Main common area	NA
	Helen Barnes, 31 Bridgend Road, Newton, Porthcawl, Bridgend. CF36 5RL.	Land registry	No – coronavirus struck before planned visit	Field south of A48	NA
Ty'n-Y-Waun	Mr Eidyl Garfield, Tynywaun Farm, Llangynwyd, Maesteg. 01656 733864.	Previous survey	Yes	Isn't aware of it being surveyed previously	No
Waunbant Road (north)	Marie Goldsworthy, Penycastell, Kenfig Hill. 07795 432176	Adjacent landowner (John & Martine Flint)	NA	NA	NA
Waunbant Road (triangle)	Marie Goldsworthy, Penycastell, Kenfig Hill. 07795 432176	Adjacent landowner (John & Martine Flint)	No – spoke to tenant (Susan Guy) and was shown round by grazier	NA	No

2.2. Survey Summaries

Site Name: Afon Cynffig	Grid Ref: SS815822
Single/Multiple Land managers?: Single	Area (ha): 0.85
Survey date: 08/01/20	
	
<p>Stretch of river corridor and river banks. Water quality appears good and still suitable for fish and otters though no signs were seen during the survey. Banks are overgrazed and poached in places apart from stretches of the left bank that run along roadside and, further downstream, are bordered by semi-natural broadleaved woodland. There are patches of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam and litter is also evident. Owner was not contacted due to coronavirus restrictions but address is available.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is to fence off a buffer strip along the river corridor to allow more diverse vegetation to develop and to prevent overgrazing and poaching. Also, removal of litter and invasive non-native species. Otter surveys and potentially the creation of an artificial holt are also recommended.</p>	

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Site Name: Coed-Ty-Maen	Grid Ref: Ss887813
Single/Multiple Land managers?: Single	Area (ha): 14.22
Survey date: 19/3/20	
	
<p>We were warned off contacting the landowners so the site was surveyed from the PROW and informal paths running through the woodland. The parts of the SINC surveyed appear to have changed little since the previous survey in 2011 with the dominant habitat being broadleaved woodland and scrub. Some of the scrubby areas identified in the previous survey have started to develop into secondary woodland. The site is likely to provide roosting sites for bats and potential for dormice. Horses are able to enter the woodland from adjacent semi-improved grassland though there was no sign of any detrimental effects at the time of survey. The area of woodland not accessed appeared unchanged from aerial photographs and when viewed with binoculars.</p>	
<p>We recommend approaching the owners through BCBC and enabling access to the block of woodland to the east where the previous survey identified a range of non-native species, none of which were seen during the current survey. In terms of habitat management some coppicing and woodland thinning in places would improve the structure of the woodland and the extent of pony grazing should also be examined.</p> <p>Bat and dormouse surveys are recommended and it would benefit the current SINC to look into adding the adjacent semi-improved grassland to the south which, although potentially not of SINC quality in itself, would provide a protective buffer to the woodland and increase the diversity of habitats. It would also help link this SINC with Coed-Y-Gains to the west.</p>	

Site Name: Coed-Y-Gains	Grid Ref: SS893814
Single/Multiple Land managers?: Single	Area (ha): 1.61
Survey date: 19/3/20	
	

This site is owned by the same family as above and therefore contact was not made, though their address is available. The woodland was assessed from the road and appears unmodified since the previous survey apart from some thinning (mainly of hazel) beneath the power lines. The SINC still qualifies as all the primary and secondary features were visible including some emerging herb paris and other woodland indicator species. There was some fallen deadwood including the material felled beneath the wires and some of the larger trees look suitable for bats. The scrubby areas of woodland look suitable for dormice. No evidence of the invasive species mentioned in the previous survey were visible from the road.

Recommendation is to contact the owners through BCBC and inquire about potential management; some thinning and coppicing would be beneficial although the frequency of ash in the canopy is likely to lead to a change in woodland structure in the future as dieback develops. Access to the woodland would allow a better assessment of habitat quality for bats as well as a more thorough survey for dormice and INNS.

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Site Name: Eastern Frog Pond Wood	Grid Ref: SS841819
Single/Multiple Land managers?: Two	Area (ha): 7.81 (including SSSI)
Survey date: 31/1/20	
	
<p>Yellow hatching = SSSI</p>	
<p>This SINC is partially covered by the Penycastell, Cefn Cribwr SSSI and areas within this were not concentrated on. The owner of the land to the south and west of the SINC showed us around – she was aware of its SSSI status but not of the SINC. The site is grazed by horses from March to October but do not like accessing the marshy fields. They also have access to the small block of woodland to the south west but are not currently detrimental. The large field to the north west is heavily grazed by horses and does not appear to be of SINC quality. There has been a new hardstanding area created in the south east corner which should also be removed from the SINC. A sandy horse track has been created across the top edge of the marshy grassland fields and gorse is regularly removed from these.</p> <p>The land within the SINC that belongs to a separate landowner is predominantly within the SSSI and includes habitat that appears suitable for dormice. The field to the west of this (not SSSI) is marshy grassland dominated by tussocky <i>Molinia</i> and encroaching scrub and, while providing some good habitat, would benefit from light grazing and scrub clearance.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is to remove the areas mentioned above from the SINC and survey some of the scrubby woodland for dormice. As mentioned above, some habitat management in the <i>Molinia</i>-dominated field, ideally light cattle grazing, would prevent it becoming more rank and limit scrub encroachment.</p> <p>We would recommend returning in summer to assess amount of devil’s-bit scabious and general suitability of site for marsh fritillaries which have not been seen here for years apparently. The levels of grazing in these fields appear suitable currently.</p>	
Site Name: Frog Pond Wood	Grid Ref: SS840818
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 5.09
Survey date: 04/12/19	



Yellow hatching = SSSI



The woodland is still of SINC quality and is currently being sympathetically managed with light coppicing and thinning. There is ample deadwood and scrub layer although the woodland flora was not possible to assess at the time of survey. The edges of the pond are heavily shaded in places and some thinning in places would allow more light to reach the pond to the benefit of aquatic vegetation.

Some areas of the woodland appear suitable for dormice and there are numerous features that would encourage bat roosting and foraging. There are some invasive non-native species such as Cotoneaster and Himalayan Balsam present.

There is also a small remnant damp meadow in the south west corner of the SINC with numerous flowering plants typical of that habitat. that isn't mentioned in the current SINC citation but increases the habitat diversity of the site despite it beginning to become rank and invaded by scrub.

Recommendation is that current management of this site continues while some benefits could be made via thinning vegetation around the pond and brushcutting the meadow area and clearing encroaching scrub; the arisings could be used to create habitat piles.

INNS should be removed along with littering from well-used paths. A thorough survey of potential habitat for bats would show whether there is a need for bat boxes to provide extra roosting sites.

Site Name: Graig Wood	Grid Ref: SS842779
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 8.94
Survey date: 27/2/20	
	
<p>The site still qualifies as a SINC as the primary feature (broad-leaved woodland) is still present and appears largely unmodified since the previous survey in 2011. The secondary feature (bluebells) are also still present though not emerged at time of survey so their extent was not clear. There is frequent standing and fallen deadwood with the owners using some for firewood but choosing to leave the rest to decompose naturally.</p> <p>The site is privately owned so there is little disturbance apart from some small informal paths</p>	

and low level harvesting of wood. Apparently deer are present and damaging the beech. The woodland appears to be suitable for bats and badgers though apparently the latter are no longer present. The main threat to the woodland is the dumping of garden waste over the back of adjacent homeowners' gardens; some of these could be detrimental to the site such as Cotoneaster. There is also Himalayan Balsam along the road and some small Rhododendron within the woodland.

Recommendation is that approaches are made to the adjacent properties to prevent tipping of garden waste although apparently the SINC owner is currently taking legal action due to encroachment. Some coppicing or light thinning would improve the woodland structure but the canopy is likely to change in coming years due to the frequency of ash present and the spread of ash dieback. Control of INNS where they are spreading from the boundaries is also a priority.

Site Name: Hirwaun Common	Grid Ref: SS944828
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Common land	Area (ha): 121.8
Survey date: 26/02/20	







Hirwaun Common is a large SINC comprised of a mosaic of habitats. The site as a whole still qualifies as a SINC despite some degradation since the previous survey in 2011 with scrub encroachment due to insufficient grazing becoming significant in some places and other areas dominated by bracken. There are also signs of nutrient enrichment in some areas of marshy grassland but there are also still areas of higher species diversity towards the eastern end as ericoids become more frequent. There are scattered Devil's-bit Scabious plants but probably not enough to support Marsh Fritillaries although it is difficult to assess at this time of year. Areas surrounding the SINC are worthy of investigation as they appear to be of similar or in some cases higher biodiversity value and the wet heath to the west and woodland pasture to the south would improve the SINC as a whole by increasing the diversity of habitats within it. The marshy grassland to the north appears to be of similar quality to that within the SINC and as it is contiguous with no physical boundary it seems logical to include it – this would greatly increase the area of an already large SINC and increase its value as a wildlife corridor between SSSI grasslands to the east and west.

Recommendation is that grazing (ideally by cattle) is introduced to improve the marshy grassland and decrease scrub encroachment. This could be accompanied by some scrub control within the marshy grassland and bracken control on the drier slopes. As mentioned above, the surrounding landscape should be surveyed to assess whether they could be added to the SINC and further surveys at appropriate times of year should be carried out on the common to assess their current suitability for Marsh Fritillaries.

Site Name: Island Farm POW Camp	Grid Ref: SS898784
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Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 14.03
Survey date: 11/03/20	
	
<p>This SINC does not appear to have changed significantly since 2011's survey and therefore still qualifies as a SINC. The small section of woodland in the field to the south-east is worth removing from the citation as it is isolated and does not appear to add to the site's value. The woodland varies in quality but appears to offer habitat for dormice and bats and there are numerous woodland indicator species. The grassland is not particularly species-rich but adds to the site as a whole.</p> <p>The site suffers from antisocial behaviour including fly-tipping, frequent drug use and signs of semi-permanent habitation that is detrimental to the biodiversity of the site.</p> <p>Recommendation is that dormouse tubes are replaced and monitored and that antisocial activities are reduced where feasible. Although the grassland areas are not very diverse they add to the diversity of the site and some scrub control to stop their loss is recommended though not a priority.</p>	

Site Name: Laleston Meadows	Grid Ref: SS880805
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Multiple	Area (ha): 10.42
Survey date: 21/01/20	
	
<p>The site appears to qualify as a SINC due to the quality of the woodland, scrub and potentially the grassland habitat features present. There are other potential qualifying factors that may well be present such as bats but it was not possible to ascertain that at the time of survey. The grassland itself should be surveyed at a more suitable time so that a more accurate assessment of its quality can be made. It doesn't appear to have changed significantly since the previous survey in 2011 although there is now sheep grazing as opposed to horse grazing in the western fields which may affect the quality of the sward.</p> <p>There is a marshy grassland field bordering the northern edge of the SINC that appears worthy of consideration for SINC status.</p> <p>There is some Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed along with some fly-tipping and potential nutrient enrichment from a slurry heap across the road from the north-western end of the site.</p>	


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Recommendation is that a further survey visit is carried out during the summer in order to assess how sheep grazing has altered the floral diversity of the meadows that was recorded during the previous survey. Control of scrub in the easternmost section would also be beneficial as the remnant meadow is becoming heavily encroached. Removal of INNS and fly-tipping along with prevention of nutrient enrichment from slurry would benefit the suite. Continued cutting of scrub beneath the overhead lines is maintaining potentially good habitat for dormice – surveying is recommended.

Site Name: Llety Brongu	Grid Ref: SS871887
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Multiple	Area (ha): 6.95
Survey date: 12/03/20	
	
<p>The SINC appears to have changed relatively little since 2011's survey with similar issues remaining. The woodland is varied in structure and type with wet woodland being predominant in the flatter areas. There are a number of woodland indicator species throughout and good amounts of deadwood. The woodland and river appear of sufficient quality to support otters and bats with the river looking clean enough to support fish. Adjacent rush-dominated fields are grazed, though not currently, and livestock are able to access the woodland.</p> <p>There are signs of fly-tipping and garden waste being put into the woodland from adjacent houses and potential impacts to the river from the equestrian yard. There is frequent Himalayan Balsam in the woods and occasional Montbretia along with patches of Japanese Knotweed on the river bank.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is that fencing is introduced to prevent livestock entering the woodland, ideally a metre or so from the current woodland edge to provide a buffer. Some light thinning/coppicing would improve the structure of the woodland and some of the timber could be used to create an otter holt near the river.</p> <p>Removal of invasives and liaison with locals to raise awareness of the deleterious effects of dumping garden waste would benefit the woodland. Bat and otter surveys are also recommended.</p>	

Site Name: Manor Farm Fields	Grid Ref: SS836780
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 7.18
Survey date: 12/12/19	

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<p>Manor Farm Fields consists of a large agriculturally improved field grazed by sheep at the time of survey. There is a small area of broadleaved woodland which appears to have changed little since the previous survey. The main feature, overwintering curlew, were not present at the time of survey but occupants of the building adjacent to the fields reported that they still use the site.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is that regular visits are undertaken to assess the overwintering population along with long-term monitoring to see how it is changing. Continued liaison with the landowner could help prevent deleterious management activities.</p>	

<p>Site Name: Moor Fam</p>	<p>Grid Ref: SS946793</p>
<p>Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single and common land</p>	<p>Area (ha): 35.28</p>
<p>Survey date: 05/02/20</p>	
	
<p>Moor Farm appears to have changed relatively little since the previous survey and so probably still qualifies as a SINC. However, due to the time of year, it was not possible to assess two of the qualifying features; the diversity of the marshy grassland or the presence of waxcap fungi. A large area of common was tightly grazed by horses and the structure appears suitable for waxcap fungi. The woodlands are accessible to the horses but do not appear badly affected with numerous indicator species starting to appear. There is little understorey in most areas however.</p>	
<p>The fields to the west are showing signs of agricultural improvement and nutrient enrichment with <i>Juncus</i> becoming dominant and little floristic diversity. These may need removing from the SINC citation following a survey of flora at an appropriate time of year.</p>	
<p>Otters are using the river but there is frequent Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is that further survey visits are carried out at appropriate times of year for accurately assessing the status of the qualifying features; namely marshy grassland flora and waxcap diversity.</p>	
<p>Removal of invasive non-native species and some lessening of grazing in the woodland areas would improve the site as a whole.</p>	

<p>Site Name: Newton Burrows</p>	<p>Grid Ref: A = SS837769, B = SS842773, C = SS850775</p>
<p>Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single</p>	<p>Area (ha): 38.7 (including SSSI)</p>
<p>Survey date: 19/02/20</p>	
<div data-bbox="248 344 767 707" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="352 707 667 741">Yellow hatching = SSSI</p>	<div data-bbox="900 344 1358 685" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1043 685 1214 719">Site A (west)</p> <div data-bbox="884 719 1374 1081" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1027 1081 1230 1115">Site B (central)</p> <div data-bbox="884 1115 1374 1478" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1043 1478 1214 1512">Site C (east)</p>
<p>Newton Burrows SINC is predominantly covered by Merthyr Mawr SSSI and these areas were therefore not surveyed. The three non-SSSI areas (A, B and C) vary in habitat type and quality and appear to have changed little since the previous survey in 2011. Site A to the west is an area of short-turfed grassland used as a car park suffers from dog fouling. As far as can be told by the time of year, the grassy area has a relatively poor floral diversity though there are low-growing perennial herbs in some areas. Area B is amenity grassland and appears not to be of SINC quality. Area C is broadleaved woodland and scrub either side of a narrow lane. The scrub and ruderal herbs mentioned in the previous survey have now developed into dense scrub and secondary woodland. The woodland below the track, while well-used by walkers, appears to still meet SINC criteria with indicator species present, though little understorey.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is that a further survey of Site A is carried out during the summer to ensure it still meets SINC criteria. It would benefit from a decrease in dog fouling. Area B should be removed from the SINC as it adds nothing to the site as a whole and is</p>	

clearly managed as amenity grassland with regular cutting and subsequent leaving of arisings having lead to nutrient enrichment and loss of species diversity.
 Area C still meets SINC criteria but would benefit from some light thinning and reinstatement of the coppicing that has clearly been done in the past in order to increase its structural diversity.

Site Name: North Eastern Dunes	Grid Ref: SS812824
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Unknown	Area (ha): 35.66 (including SSSI)
Survey date: 27/01/20	
	 <p style="text-align: center;">Site A</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Site B</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Site C</p>

The majority of the SINC is covered by the Kenfig SSSI and these areas were consequently not surveyed. The three remaining sections appear to have changed slightly since the previous survey; the largest section (A) to the north has had a circular track excavated seemingly to exercise horses. While appearing deleterious it has at least created areas of open sand which are sorely lacking on the otherwise predominantly fixed dunes. This section of SINC also includes horse-grazed improved pasture which does not appear to have any biodiversity value

and should be considered for removal from the SINC citation.

The small piece of woodland and scrub to the east (B) is dominated by alders with an understorey of bramble along with woodland indicator species such as bluebells. There is a lot of rubbish that collects when the river (Afon Cynffig SINC) is high and dense Himalayan Balsam is spreading throughout. Japanese Knotweed is also present. The stream that flows through here looked to be polluted with grey water at the time of survey.

The final section is dense blackthorn along the road verge ©. Behind this, beneath overhead lines, has more ruderal herbs but is rapidly being swamped by blackthorn and bramble. There is a small triangle of tussocky grassland and low scrub adjacent to this that is not in the SINC and should be considered for inclusion.

Recommendation is that some of the northern section is removed from the SINC and a small area to the east considered for inclusion. Surveying for reptiles later in the year would potentially help direct management such as remobilising dunes and creating areas of bare sand. The small wooded area needs removal of invasive non-native species and litter while the blackthorn-dominated area would benefit from selective thinning (although this is likely to be done by Western Power while maintaining the overhead lines).

Site Name: North of Pyle	Grid Ref: SS837834
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 9.89
Survey date: 08/01/20	



The woodland and amenity grassland within the SINC appears to have changed little since the previous survey but the small area of marshy grassland mentioned appears to have developed into scrub and young woodland. Some of the woodland shows frequent use by local people and there is frequent litter, dog fouling and dumping of garden waste. There also areas of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. The woodland varies in structure and composition but many areas appear suitable for roosting bats and the river would act as a good corridor and provide forage. Some of the woodland looks suitable for dormice and there are typical woodland indicator species. The previously-mentioned Badger sett was not seen during the survey but there is no reason to think it might not still be present. There is an area beneath the overhead lines which is maintained as low scrub and ruderal herbs and adds to the biodiversity value of the site.

The river appears to be clean and there was frequent Dipper activity along with a very well-used Otter sprainting site.

The final section is improved grassland managed as amenity grassland and appears of low biodiversity value.


Recommendation is that some light thinning and coppicing to increase structural diversity and would be beneficial for Dormice. Removal of invasive non-native species and litter would improve the aesthetics of the site and benefit native woodland flora and fauna.



General Bat and Dormouse surveys would help direct management of the site and the coke ovens adjacent to the SINC should be surveyed for bats with the potential to incorporating it

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in to the SINC.

The area of amenity grassland could be removed from the citation or have its mowing regime changed to attempt to improve its floristic diversity.

Site Name: Pant Farm/Hirwaun Common	Grid Ref: SS919841
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: BCBC and common land	Area (ha): 10.36
Survey date: 03/02/20	
	
<p>The site consists of a mosaic of damp semi-improved grassland and scrub with wet ditches and streams throughout. It certainly still qualifies as a SINC due to the presence of indicator species within the marshy grassland. The level of grazing appears to be appropriate with few signs of over-stocking and no negative indicators seen (dock, clovers). There also appear to be large areas of suitable habitat adjacent to the current SINC boundary that should be considered for inclusion. There is one area of the SINC that consists predominantly of dense bracken which would benefit from some management and there is also Japanese knotweed present in at least one location (see map) and Himalayan balsam along most of the waterways. It was difficult to assess the density of this growth at this time of year however. Signs of Otter were seen along the stream that passes through the western section of the SINC.</p>	
<p>We would recommend re-surveying in summer to get a better idea of the quality of the grassland (extent of Devil's-bit scabious etc.) and also to survey more thoroughly for water voles as the habitat appears suitable in a number of areas within the SINC and outside it. No signs were found during a limited search.</p> <p>Removal of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed should be a priority.</p>	

Site Name: Rych Point	Grid Ref: SS827763
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: None(?)	Area (ha): 5.51
Survey date: 21/01/20	
	

Bridgend SINC Survey

The SINC is unmodified since the previous survey and should therefore remain listed as a SINC. There was a small amount of litter and the rubble/concrete blocks that protect the shore remain unchanged (as was suggested in the previous survey).

Recommendation is that litter clearance is maintained and replacing rubble with more natural stone. Interpretation encouraging people not to remove too much driftwood would be beneficial all along this coastline.

Site Name: St. James Church Wood	Grid Ref: SS822825
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 4.86
Survey date: 16/12/19	



The SINC appears to have changed little since the previous survey and still qualifies due to the presence of native broadleaved woodland and a few indicator species (difficult to assess species richness at time of survey). The river appears suitable for aquatic invertebrates, fish and otters although no signs were seen. Some areas of the woodland look suitable for dormice.

The amenity grassland included in the SINC appears to offer little and there is frequent littering and dog-fouling not only here but throughout the woodland along with signs of burning at the base of numerous trees including one large ash for which the fire could have been a contributing factor to its falling.

There is Himalayan Balsam and one large area of Japanese Knotweed along the river banks and a potential source of run-off from an adjacent field heavily poached by pigs.

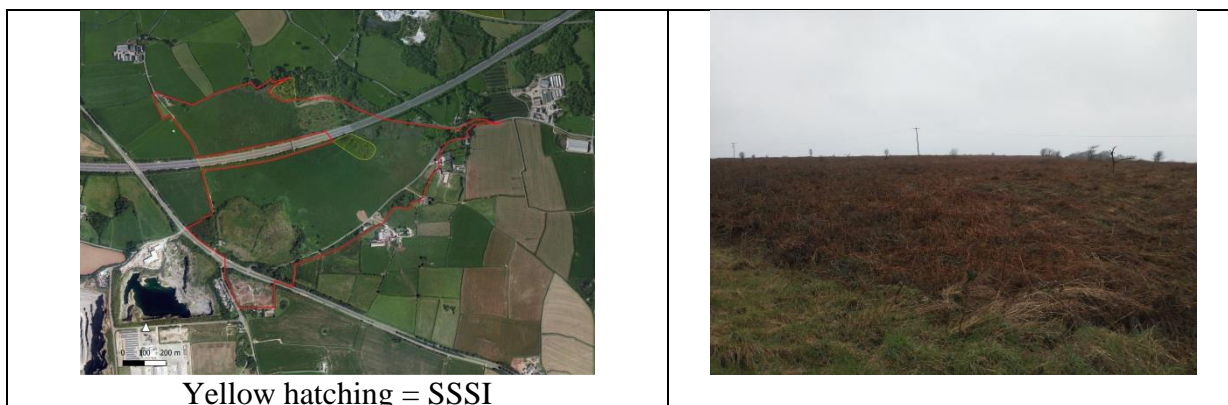
We would recommend taking measures to limit the antisocial behaviour which is slightly damaging the woodland in places – possibly some interpretation/leaflets to raise awareness of its value to wildlife.

Removal of invasive species will minimise impact on native plants and decrease chance of bank destabilisation.

Setting up some dormouse monitoring could establish presence/distribution of the species here.

Some woodland management in the form of thinning and coppicing would benefit the ground flora and improve the woodland structure although, given the frequency of ash in the woodland, the canopy composition may change in coming years without any active management.

Site Name: Stormy Down	Grid Ref: SS849809
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Common land	Area (ha): 74.25
Survey date: 04/03/20	



Yellow hatching = SSSI

The majority of this site is no longer of SINC quality due to a lack of management since 2011's survey. The large section south of the M4 is dominated by bracken and scrub with frequent invasive non-native species and does not qualify as a SINC any longer. There are scattered patches which are more diverse but they are not significant in a site of this size. The area north of the M4 probably still qualifies with more signs of active management (burning). A large portion is *Molinia*-dominated but with remnant heath vegetation. The burning, while removing thatching appears to be too frequent to allow widespread establishment of heathland vegetation. There is also an area of wetland vegetation and scrub which adds habitat diversity to the site as a whole although it is frequently used by scrambler bikes. The large piece of land that has been established as a solar farm within the SINC does not offer any biodiversity value.

In addition to the large area of common there is a small section south of the A48 that appears to be the site of old military buildings. There is access to underground structures which could be good bat hibernation sites if human access is restricted with suitable specialized openings for bats installed.

Around the edges of the whole site are patches of broadleaved woodland with indicator species such as bluebells along with frequent non-natives.

There is frequent fly-tipping and signs that local farmers use some of the common for storage of silage bales and adjacent houses are managing sections by their property as lawn. There is one large area to the west that is used to dump horse manure/bedding on a regular basis and has clearly been used for a long time; it is a source of nutrient enrichment as well as affecting the local native vegetation. The dead-end land that this is next to is clearly a well-known site for fly-tipping.

We recommend removing the majority of this site from the SINC list unless significant management is initiated. Cutting and removing areas of bracken to allow more diverse vegetation to develop and removal of invasive non-native species would be priorities.

Designing novel methods of developing the underground structures into potential bat hibernation sites would add an extra feature to the SINC.

Currently the solar farm should be removed from the SINC but ideally discussions with the owners could help develop more wildlife-friendly management of the grassland beneath the panels.

One of the priorities for the site as a whole would be to limit fly-tipping especially along the dead-end lane to the west that is accessed from the A48. Establishing who is using this area as a site to dump the waste from their stables shouldn't be difficult given the apparent frequency of use and presumably would be fairly nearby.

Site Name: Ty'n-Y-Waun	Grid Ref: SS867885
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 7.29
Survey date: 12/03/20	



This site overall still qualifies as a SINC due to the quality of its native broadleaved woodland and associated ground flora. The grassland itself is not currently of SINC quality and shows signs of nutrient enrichment and attempts at agricultural improvement. These have not established particularly well, probably due to the wetness of the ground. As part of these activities the farmer has cleared encroaching young trees which has maintained open grassland/rush pasture. The farmer is currently grazing with cattle but having spoken to them it is clear that they consider them scruffy and would like to revert them to agriculturally improved 'productive' land.

Recommendation is that attempts are made to improve the quality and diversity of the marshy grassland by decreasing nutrients and maintaining low intensity cattle grazing along with selective scrub control.

The woodland would benefit in places from selected thinning and invasive non-native species control along the watercourse would potentially be of great benefit as the stream runs both directions along the railway cutting so could be a good place to start catchment-scale Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed clearance.

Site Name: Waunbant Road (north)	Grid Ref: SS843822
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 2.39
Survey date: 04/12/19	





Yellow hatching = SSSI



The entirety of this SINC is covered by the Pency Castell, Cefn Cribwr SSSI and so only a limited walkover survey from the PROW was carried out. It is clear that active management is being undertaken although some light grazing would help decrease some of the ranker grasses. Some of the grassland areas are becoming encroached by scrub despite the management that is being undertaken. The woodland areas have limited understory and there is some fly-tipping along the hedge bank on the southern boundary.

Recommendation is that more sympathetic scrub control is undertaken within the meadow areas. This shouldn't be too excessive as to damage the scrub feature of the SINC but enough to maintain areas of species-rich grassland from encroaching bramble. Some light thinning of the woodland would benefit the ground flora. A summer survey to assess the grassland more

effectively is also recommended.

Site Name: Waunbant Road (triangle)	Grid Ref: SS844818
Single/Multiple Land Managers?: Single	Area (ha): 3.96
Survey date: 16/12/19	
	
Yellow hatching = SSSI	
<p>This SINC is described as 3 fields in the previous citation but is now only 2 due to removal of a field boundary. It is grazed year-round with an annual hay cut taken. The previous SINC stated that the grassland was no longer of SINC quality. It appears slightly more floristically diverse now as the management might have changed but it needs surveying in summer to get a more accurate idea of the status of the grassland. The tenant mentioned that he had tried spreading manure/straw once but it hadn't made a difference. Apparently there is not as much Devil's-bit Scabious as there used to be and the ragwort is removed annually. Japanese Knotweed is present in two places but is being controlled by injection of herbicide.</p>	
<p>Recommendation is to survey in summer in order to accurately assess whether the current management is benefitting the grassland and therefore whether it is still of SINC quality. As mentioned in previous survey, the woodland and hedgerows might qualify in their own right. Japanese Knotweed control should continue and monitoring of new invasions from the railway line undertaken annually.</p>	

2.3. SINC Status Summary

SINC name	Does the SINC still qualify?
Afon Cynffig	Yes but deteriorating
Coed-Ty-Maen	Yes
Coed-y-Gains	Yes
Eastern Frog Pond Wood	Partly
Frog Pond Wood	Yes
Graig Wood	Yes
Hirwaun Common	Yes but deteriorating
Island Farm POW Camp	Yes
Laleston Meadows	Yes
Lletty Brongu	Yes but deteriorating
Manor Farm Fields	Yes
Moor Farm	Yes but deteriorating
Newton Burrows	Yes but deteriorating

North Eastern Dunes	Yes but deteriorating
North of Pyle	Yes
Pant Farm/Hirwaun Common	Yes
Rych Point	Yes
St. James' Church Wood	Yes
Stormy Down	Partly
Ty'n-y-Waun	Yes
Waunbant Road (north)	Yes
Waunbant Road (triangle)	Yes

3. Conclusions

Due to the time of year that the site visits were carried out only a qualitative survey was undertaken to assess general condition of the SINC in question. In many cases, the grassland SINC in particular, summer visits are required to accurately assess floral diversity of grasslands and therefore whether current grazing regimes are suitable or not.

It was not always possible to establish the landowners despite use of land registry, internet searches and visits to properties adjacent to the piece of land in question. In some cases the listed landowner lived abroad so was not contacted in the course of the contract. Where the landowners could be contacted they were willing for the land to be surveyed but were unaware of the site's status as a SINC. If it was partly a SSSI they were usually aware of this fact so it could be beneficial to send out the SINC citations where landowner's have been confirmed.

In general it was discovered that to an extent all the SINC still qualified, at least in part, for inclusion on BCBC's list. In some cases it is recommended that parts of the SINC are removed due to change in use (e.g. installation of solar farm), under-management or mismanagement (e.g. overgrazing). Elsewhere SINC had adjacent pieces of land that looked worthy of further investigation as they looked like potential additions to the current SINC.

While it was not always easy to judge the quality of the grassland habitats, the woodland features were generally in good condition although almost all would benefit from some light woodland management. In almost all of the sites invasive non-native species were present; particularly Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed.

There were signs of species monitoring in a couple of sites (e.g. Island Farm POW Camp) but more surveys for protected species such as Dormice, Bats, Badgers and Otters could help direct management on these sites.

4. Appendix

Appendix 1 Site Recommendations

SINCs changed	Recommendations
Afon Cynffig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fence river bank • Removal of INNS • Removal of litter
Coed-Ty-Maen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach owners for more extensive survey • Woodland management • Dormouse survey • Incorporate adjacent land
Coed-y-Gains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach owners for more extensive survey • Woodland management • Dormouse survey
Eastern Frog Pond Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove north-westerly field from SINC • Introduce light grazing in <i>Molinia</i>-dominated field • Summer visit to assess Devil's-bit Scabious • Dormouse survey in scrubby area
Frog Pond Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue woodland management • Introduce management in small meadow area • Thin vegetation shading pond edge • Removal of INNS
Graig Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent tipping of garden waste • Woodland management • Removal of INNS
Hirwaun Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce cattle grazing • Scrub control • Bracken control • Investigate wider landscape for extension of SINC • Summer visit to assess Marsh Fritillary habitat
Island Farm POW Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrub control • Reintroduce Dormouse monitoring • Reduce antisocial behaviour
Laleston Meadows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrub control • Summer visit to assess change in floral diversity • Removal of INNS • Removal of litter • Prevent nutrient enrichment from slurry pile • Investigate addition of field to the north
Lletty Brongu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fence woodland • Woodland management • Otter survey and potential creation of otter holt • Removal of INNS • Removal of garden waste
Manor Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular visits to assess Curlew population

Bridgend SINC Survey

Fields	
Moor Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys at appropriate times of year for grassland flora and waxcaps • Reduce grazing in woodland areas • Removal of INNS
Newton Burrows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey Site A in summer to assess floral diversity • Remove Area B from SINC • Woodland management in Area C
North Eastern Dunes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider extending SINC to the east • Scrub control • Create blowouts • Reptile surveys • Removal of INNS • Removal of litter
North of Pyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland management • Removal of INNS • Removal of litter • Remove amenity grassland from SINC • Bat surveys
Pant Farm/Hirwaun Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey in summer to assess floral diversity (esp. Devil's-bit Scabious) • Water vole survey • Removal of INNS
Rych Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace rubble with natural stone
St. James' Church Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland management • Reduce antisocial behaviour • Removal of INNS • Dormouse surveys
Stormy Down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove majority of site from SINC • Reduce fly-tipping • Removal of INNS • Establish who is dumping horse manure • Adapt underground structures for bats
Ty'n-y-Waun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce nutrient input in marshy grassland • Scrub control • Woodland management • Removal of INNS
Waunbant Road (north)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light scrub control • Woodland management • Summer survey to assess floral diversity
Waunbant Road (triangle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer visit to assess floral diversity • Potentially add woodland and hedges as feature • Continue INNS control

Appendix 2: Survey Visit Notes

Afon Cynffig

08/01/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

No landowner listed.

The vast majority of the riverbank is overgrazed by sheep, especially the right bank which has scattered trees and little else. The left bank is grazed right up to the channel to the east where the river flows through the middle of the field. Further downstream it runs alongside the road where there is a 2-3m wide strip of broadleaves trees and bramble scrub; this border might help ameliorate run-off but it still presents a pollution risk. The river then runs adjacent to the North Eastern Dunes SINC before going underneath the railway. For this stretch the adjacent land is young semi-natural broadleaved woodland consisting mainly of ash, alder, hazel and sycamore with some hawthorn and blackthorn. There is a dense understorey in places with bramble, holly, ivy and dog's mercury along with various ferns including hart's-tongue.

There are quite a few patches of Japanese knotweed on both banks while the woodland to the west has a lot of Himalayan balsam. There is also a lot of rubbish in this area.

The river itself appears relatively clean with clear water and gravel and stone bed apparently not algae-dominated. The banks are mostly unmodified apart from a makeshift bridge and a ford. They will be subject to erosion and overgrazing however.

No fish were seen during the survey but it still appears to be suitable habitat for them. Similarly, no otter spraint was seen though it was not possible to thoroughly check the whole stretch due to the high water level and strong flow. A dipper was briefly seen flying downriver.

Fauna seen

Dipper, magpie, woodpigeon, song thrush, herring gull, raven, carrion crow, robin, blue tit, blackbird, grey squirrel, candlesnuff fungus.

Conclusion

The river itself appears to still be relatively clean and qualify for SINC criteria but the majority of the banks themselves are of low ecological value due to heavy grazing pressure.

The site would benefit from removal of invasive species and litter while fencing off the river corridor would allow a more structurally diverse community of riparian vegetation which would not only provide habitat for numerous species but also act as a buffer to any agricultural run-off.

Coed-Ty-Maen

19/03/20

Overcast, cold

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

We were advised against trying to locate the owners of this land and of Coed-Y-Gains by local people so the survey was carried out from the PROW running through the west of the site. We also followed a couple of unofficial paths further into the woodland but didn't try to access the portion of woodland to the east. There are numerous well-used paths through the woodland and in the unimproved fields to the south due to the proximity of Cefn Glas.

The woodland surveyed appeared to have been unmodified since the previous survey in 2011; it was comprised of a canopy dominated by ash and some oak standards with numerous hazel, hawthorn, holly and bramble forming a scrub layer in places. Where there was little scrub layer the ground flora was often dominated by ivy but there was also bluebells, primroses, wood anemone, lords-and-ladies, dog's mercury, mosses and ferns. There are wetter areas throughout the woodland with opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage and horsetail.

Some of the large trees have features that are very suitable for bats (rot holes, hazard beams, woodpecker holes etc.) and some areas have good amounts of fallen and standing deadwood. Elsewhere, in areas of younger woodland, there is a dearth of deadwood habitat which could be provided by coppicing/thinning and using the arisings to create habitat piles which will rot down over time. The woodland offers potential dormouse habitat as well as badgers, although no evidence of either was seen during the visit (no intensive searches were carried out).

Bridgend SINC Survey

There was no evidence of invasive species in the area surveyed but the previous SINC survey reported Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam in the eastern section which should be investigated and removed if present. Similarly, the eastern block was supposed to have areas of conifers and other non-native species. We could not access this area of the site so couldn't confirm that these were still present.

The previous survey recommended planting trees between the two main blocks to increase connectivity, this appears to be happening naturally as willows have developed significantly in the meantime. The gap is clearly still used as a thoroughfare so is unlikely to ever close over completely. The rest of this adjacent land to the south is semi-improved grassland/rush pasture which is slowly converting to scrubby woodland – willow copses have developed and are spreading while the edge of the woodland (and SINC) is gradually spreading into it as bramble overtakes the woodland. This area is obviously used by local walkers and there are signs that it is grazed by ponies though none were seen and there were no obviously very recent signs; these ponies would have free access into the woodland. As far as could be told at the time of survey this area wouldn't qualify as SINC habitat in its own right but would benefit the SINC as a whole as it would offer protection to the woodland edge and also help link up this site with SINC LAL-3-N to the west. If low-level grazing is continued it could maintain a woodland pasture-type habitat which would benefit a different suite of species and, as mentioned in the previous survey, the creation of a pond would further increase the diversity of the site.

Fauna seen

Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Jay, Magpie, Goldfinch, Nuthatch, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Wren, King Alfred's Cakes, Scarlet Elf Cup.

Conclusion

The site still qualifies as a SINC as the primary feature (broad-leaved woodland) is still present and appears largely unmodified since the previous survey. The secondary features are also all visible and while some of the scrub is developing into secondary woodland, other areas are turning from ruderal herbs/remnant grassland into more mature scrub.

The woodland would benefit from some thinning and coppicing in places though the canopy is likely to change markedly in coming years due to the high frequency of mature ash trees. There are a lot of unofficial paths throughout although little sign of anti-social behaviour in the woodland area surveyed. The access that ponies have to the woodland is potentially detrimental though no evidence of significant damage was seen.

If it is possible to approach the landowners through BCBC then it would be worth trying to gain access to the eastern area of woodland to ascertain whether this still qualifies as a SINC though there appears no reason why it wouldn't from viewing it from a distance and from aerial photographs.

Coed-Y-Gains

19/03/20

Overcast, cold

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

We were advised against trying to locate the owners of this land and of Coed-Ty-Maen by local people so the survey was carried out from the road running along the eastern boundary of the site.

The main part of the woodland visible from the road appeared to have been unmodified since the previous survey in 2011; it was comprised of a canopy dominated by ash and some oak standards with a sparse scrub layer of hazel, bramble and guelder rose amongst others and a ground flora of bluebells, wood anemone, dog's mercury, lesser celandine, yellow archangel and lords-and-ladies with young herb paris starting to appear. There are wetter areas and issues throughout the woodland with opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage and meadowsweet.

Some of the large trees appear to offer suitable for bats and there was some standing and fallen deadwood visible from the road. The woodland offers potential dormouse habitat as well as badgers, although no evidence of either was seen during the visit (no intensive searches were carried out).

Towards the far east of the site the trees beneath the overhead lines had been cleared (mainly hazel) and the arisings stacked up around the edge. This cutting (effectively coppicing) will increase the structure of the woodland locally as more light reaches the floor and the hazel regrows.

There was no evidence of invasive species in the area surveyed but the previous SINC survey reported Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam along the southern boundary which should be investigated and removed if present. There was a fair bit of litter along the roadside.

Fauna seen

Mistle Thrush, Robin, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Woodpigeon, Wren, King Alfred's Cakes, Scarlet Elf Cup.

Conclusion

Bridgend SINC Survey

The site still qualifies as a SINC as the primary features are still present: the broad-leaved woodland appears to be largely unchanged since the previous survey and indicator species, including herb paris, are still present.

The woodland would benefit from some thinning and coppicing in places though the canopy is likely to change markedly in coming years due to the high frequency of mature ash trees.

If it is possible to approach the landowners through BCBC then it would be worth trying to gain access further in to the woodland to get a better picture of the quality of the site as a whole.

Eastern Frog Pond Wood

31/01/20

Mild, rain

Staff present: Kerry Rogers, Vaughn Matthews

Notes

South west corner (3 on map) is scrubby woodland, damp in places, which is dominated by oak with a bramble understorey. There is no sign of pond marked on map. This opens up into two (SSSI) marshy grassland fields (4) which have been grazed by ponies and retain floral interest with selfheal, purple loosestrife, *Molinia* and tormentil still visible. No sign of devil's-bit scabious was seen and this should be looked for at a more appropriate time of year. There are areas of soft rush and some small willow trees regenerating. Apparently gorse incursion is a problem and the landowners removed a significant amount a couple of years ago. There are still patches but they aren't currently detrimental to the grassland habitat. A sandy horse gallop has been created along the northern edge of these fields. Between the fields there is a line of mature trees with bramble beneath. A (culverted?) ditch runs beneath this tree line and was flowing at the time of survey. Horses graze the marshy fields from March to October but don't like going in. Section A's are fenced in when required. Adjacent grazier reported that there used to be a lot more trees in the southern section but they have been removed.

The land above the horse track belongs to a different landowner and was not visited during this survey but could be viewed from outside. The rectangular field (2) that is outside of the SSSI is marshy grassland dominated by tussocky *Molinia* and encroaching willow, blackthorn and bramble scrub. It provides good habitat but would benefit from some light grazing to remove the thatch and removal of some of the scrub. The other two parcels of land (6) are within the SSSI and consist of a mosaic of marshy grassland and scrubby woodland. It would benefit from some light coppicing but currently provides good habitat for dormice and surveys are recommended.

Landowner is aware of it being a SSSI but not a SINC. NRW come and look for marsh fritillaries occasionally but haven't seen one for years. The landowners manage to comply with SSSI but don't like the 'untidy' fields like the neighbouring SINC/SSSI fields.

Fauna seen

Red Fox (signs), Rabbit (signs), Field Vole (signs), Magpie, Woodpigeon, Raven, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Herring Gull, Robin.

Conclusion

The two marshy fields that are within the SSSI are still of SINC quality and appear to be grazed appropriately – this should continue. The small patch of woodland in the south (also non-SSSI) is worthy of its SINC status as is the rectangular meadow (**see map**) though the meadow is starting to become dominated by scrub and could do with some light conservation grazing (ideally by cattle) and scrub control. The two SSSI fields to the northeast (SSSI and not entered) are of SINC quality and provide excellent dormouse habitat. They would benefit from some light coppicing to improve the structural diversity.

The pasture to the west (1) (non-SSSI) is heavily grazed by horses and is now an improved pasture with very little floral diversity so no longer qualifies as a SINC. There is also a small corner in the southeast of the SINC (5) that is outside of the SSSI and is now a hard-standing for vehicles and should therefore be removed from the SINC.

Bridgend SINC Survey



Frog Pond Wood

4/12/19

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

The woodland consists of a range of native tree species of varying ages. There are some large standards, canopy gaps and deadwood. The understorey was difficult to assess at the time of the survey but there are areas that have been coppiced in recent years, letting light reach the woodland floor. In places more coppicing would be beneficial as there are areas where it is becoming overshadowed to the detriment of ground flora. Some large ash are present which may need to be removed if ash dieback is present.

The pond has large areas of open water with small patches of *Phragmites* within it. The edges are largely shaded by scrub, in particular some large willows. The pond would benefit from some of these being pushed back to allow a little more light in and to decrease nutrient input from leaf fall. As it is the pond should still provide suitable habitat for amphibians and invertebrates.

There is a small area of damp meadow in the south-west corner of the site that isn't mentioned in the SINC citation. There is still a good range of flowering plants present that are typical of the habitat (fleabane, figwort, water mint, sneezewort, meadowsweet, sharp-flowered rush, selfheal etc.) but the grass is starting to become thatched and bramble and willow is encroaching around the sides. It would benefit from brushcutting with arisings removed or piled in area of low habitat value nearby. There is some Himalayan balsam along the western edge which shouldn't be allowed to spread.

Some signs of INNS – occasional Cotoneaster, Himalayan honeysuckle and Himalayan balsam. Litter is present along the main paths.

Fauna seen

Blue Tit, Magpie, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Robin, Mallard, Nuthatch, Wren, Rabbit.

Conclusion

The site appears to qualify as a SINC due to the quality of the woodland, scrub and pond habitat features present. There are other potential qualifying factors that may well be present such as bats but it was not possible to ascertain that at the time of survey.

Graig Wood

27/02/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

Bridgend SINC Survey

The woodland is a privately-owned site on a south-west facing slope whose owner's groundsman showed me around. It includes some very large ash, beech and sycamore with some areas of the canopy dominated by beech and with associated limited shrub layer. Elsewhere there is fewer beech and some sycamore and oak. Elsewhere there are signs of previous coppicing with subsequently more diverse shrub layer consisting of bramble, hawthorn, blackthorn etc. The ground flora is dominated by ivy with areas of bluebell, dog's-mercury, wood anemone, hart's-tongue fern and (non-native) daffodils. There is frequent standing and fallen deadwood with the owners taking some for firewood but preferring to leave the majority to decompose naturally. There is very frequent sycamore regeneration visible where gaps in the canopy are created.

In the centre of the wood there is evidence of an old quarry and also old boundary walls, now hidden by vegetation.

The owners reported deer being present as well as squirrels, the latter of which have damaged beech trees. Foxes are also present and badgers have been seen previously but are not thought to be here now (no signs evident).

There are frequent signs of dumping of building materials and garden waste along the back of the houses along the western boundary. Some of these are a threat to the biodiversity of the site (cotoneaster for example) but include *Vinca sp.*, *Nasturtiums*, spring snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*). Rhododendron is present in the garden and apparently in small amounts within the woodland but none was seen at the time of survey. Himalayan balsam is present in the woodland along the roadside.

Fauna seen

Molehills, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Green Woodpecker, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Wren, Buff-tailed Bumblebee, King Alfred's Cakes, Jelly-ear Fungus.

Conclusion

The site still qualifies as a SINC as the primary feature (broad-leaved woodland) is still present and appears largely unmodified since the previous survey. The secondary feature (bluebells) are also still present though not emerged at time of survey so their extent was not clear.

Deadwood is mostly left to decompose as it falls to the benefit of biodiversity and there is relatively little disturbance with a few small informal paths used by the owners. The woodland would benefit from some thinning and coppicing in places though the canopy is likely to change markedly in coming years due to the high frequency of mature ash trees. There are some areas where there has clearly been coppicing previously and the woodland would benefit from resumption of this activity.

Hirwaun Common

26/02/20

Sunny, cold

Staff present: Kerry Rogers, Vaughn Matthews

Notes

Hirwaun Common is a large SINC comprised of a mosaic of marshy grassland, acid grassland, scrub, bracken and areas of woodland.

Area 1 on map is marshy grassland made up of a mixture of rush pasture and neutral grassland. There are some signs of nutrient enrichment but the wetter areas have more botanical interest. Area 2 is more *Molinia*-dominated with interspersed *Juncus*. Again there are signs of nutrient enrichment. Between these two is a strip of trees (birch, willow and conifer). The eastern edge of the SINC is demarcated by a stream with short turf and anthills on the banks and frequent aquatic vegetation. There were signs of otter activity here. The southern edge of this section is rabbit-grazed grassland with patches of dense gorse.

Area 3 is an extensive stretch of *Molinia*-dominated marshy grassland. The *Molinia* is rank in places but other areas are more species rich with the number of ericoids (mainly *E. tetralix*) increasing as you move to the east. Some areas are very mossy with some dense *Sphagnum*. There are very sparse devil's-bit scabious and bog asphodel plants amongst the *Molinia*. There is low density encroachment by willow and gorse throughout but this becomes much more significant as you move east and up slope.

Along the main ridge (area 4 on map) the main habitat is grazed acid grassland (sheep present in very low numbers at time of survey – main grazers rabbits at the moment?) with bracken and scattered gorse which become extensive stands in places. There are scattered clumps of *Calluna*, lichens and bog asphodel. The bracken shows signs of being treated but it becomes much more dense towards the east. On top of the ridge near the western end there is a strip of marshy grassland with areas of standing water hosting round-leaved water-crowfoot and frogspawn.

In area 5, a south-facing slope, it is becoming dense scrub and woodland with some mature oaks along the hedgeline and dense bracken and gorse. This area is a good component of the SINC, offering different habitats to elsewhere and the edges of the scrub look ideal for reptiles. Area 7 is dominated more by dense gorse with grazed sward between.

Areas 6, 8 and 9 are remnant marshy grassland with *Molinia* heavily encroached by scrub and bracken. To the south of area 8 there is what looks like woodland pasture habitat outside of the SINC boundary. This warrants further survey as it looks from a distance like it would be a beneficial addition.

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Finally area 10 at the western end of the site is more improved damp grassland which extends into more interesting wet heath habitat that is actually outside of the SINC boundary. Within the SINC is a Welsh Water reservoir with a flat gravel roof. A lapwing was seen to fly up from this at the time of survey and appears to offer ideal breeding habitat for the species. Adjacent to this is a large pond which is fenced off and surrounded by trees. This is a good component of the SINC offering a significant area of undisturbed open water.

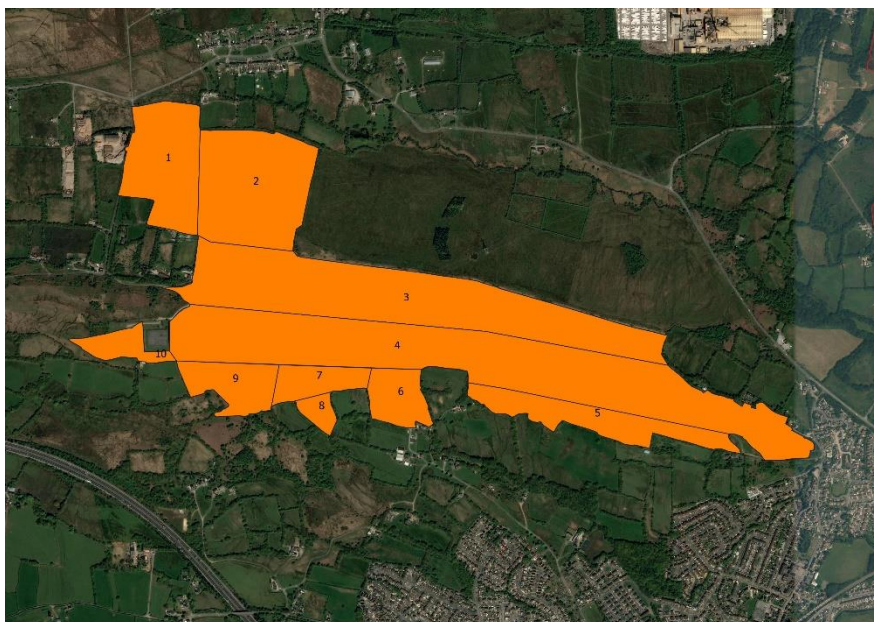
Fauna seen

Otter (signs), Fox (scat), Rabbit (signs), Field Vole (signs), Common Lizard, Common Frog, Meadow Pipit, Snipe, Woodpigeon, Skylark, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Magpie, Great Tit, Herring Gull, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Sparrowhawk, Wren, Carrion Crow, Red Kite, Lapwing, Buzzard, Stonechat, Long-tailed Tit, Bullfinch, Jelly-ear Fungus, Yellow Brain Fungus, Gorse Shieldbug, Hairy Shieldbug, 7-spot Ladybird.

Conclusion

Hirwaun Common still qualifies as a SINC though it would benefit from some scrub control and bracken rolling in order to prevent the scrub encroaching into the marshy grassland areas. These *Molinia*-dominated areas are undergrazed in places; introduction of cattle grazing would improve the structural and species diversity. There didn't appear to be suitable amounts of devil's-bit scabious to support marsh fritillaries but that was difficult assess at the time of survey.

Areas surrounding the SINC are worthy of investigation as they appear to be of similar or in some cases higher biodiversity value and the wet heath to the west and woodland pasture to the south would improve the SINC as a whole by increasing the diversity of habitats within it. The marshy grassland to the north appears to be of similar quality to that within the SINC and as it is contiguous with no physical boundary it seems logical to include it – this would greatly increase the area of an already large SINC and increase its value as a wildlife corridor between SSSI grasslands to the east and west.



Island Farm POW Camp

11/03/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Kerry, Rogers, Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

The site does not appear to have changed significantly in composition since the previous survey with a mixture of broadleaved and non-native woodland in a mosaic with bramble scrub, species-poor semi-improved grassland and ruderal herbs.

There are frequent signs of anti-social behaviour including fly-tipping, drug use (significant amounts of aerosol containers), off-road bikes and signs of habitation (tents, shelters) throughout which negatively impact the biodiversity and aesthetics of the site. There are also some INNS present including rhododendron, Himalayan balsam and Japanese rose which should be removed before they become too widespread.

The woodlands vary in quality and composition throughout but there is frequent deadwood and numerous specimen trees. In some areas there is diverse natural understorey with AWI such as bluebells, wood anemones and moschatel. Elsewhere there is dense hazel with signs of previous coppicing (old coppice stools and secondary growth) with ash, beech and willow standards. Some of the woodland looks suitable for dormice and there are numerous

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dormouse tubes and doxes, the majority of which need replacing. In a couple of places there are lines of large beech trees, apparently the site of an old hedgeline. Within the woodland there are a few small ponds and bat boxes have been installed in trees around the site.

There are a few scattered areas of semi-improved, species-poor neutral grassland around the SINC which appear to be mostly kept open by the grazing of rabbits. They are rank and often mossy with ruderal herbs such as ragwort and willowherbs.

Surrounding the open areas there are extensive banks of dense bramble and in other locations there is bramble and bracken scrub and patches of extremely dense blackthorn monoculture.

The site would benefit from the replacement and monitoring of dormouse boxes and tubes though the amount of anti-social behaviour may mean that these are short-lived.

Fauna seen

Buzzard, Pheasant, Mistle Thrush, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Nuthatch, Wren, Rabbit, Molehills, Grey Squirrel, Buff-tailed Bumblebee, Yellow Brain Fungus.

Conclusion

The small section of woodland around a small quarried area in the adjacent field could be removed from the SINC but the rest of it still meets the criteria due to the continued presence of bats in the buildings and also habitat which is suitable for dormice and retains AWI species.

Laleston Meadows

20/01/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

The SINC is a varied mixture of habitats of varying quality. It has been split into sections here for ease of description (**see map**).

Areas

1. The westernmost part of the SINC consists of a mixture of heavily grazed semi-improved grassland, dense scrub and semi-mature woodland.
The fields were being grazed by sheep at the time of the survey and the sward was very short. There was a flock of redwings foraging on it but it was impossible to assess the diversity of the vegetation due to the time of year and intensity of grazing. There was a line of large ash and oak (presumably an old field boundary) within the grazed field.
There were areas of dense scrub in places, mainly consisting of willow and bramble and towards the east it turned into more mature woodland with mature oak and ash with an understorey of hazel. Sheep had access to the wooded areas and the scrub layer was sparse.
There was a flailed hedge along the road running along the western boundary which could be improved by more sympathetic management. The main road running through the SINC is edged with trees (hazel, willow, ash) and some large standards (oak, ash) with dense scrub beyond. Potentially providing corridors of dormouse habitat.
2. This section comprised of a long narrow field of semi-improved damp grassland which has been grazed by sheep (none currently). It is difficult to assess the diversity of the grassland though there were frequent agrimony plants throughout. The northern edge features a line of mature trees with little understorey as livestock is free to graze it.
3. Section 3 is contiguous to section 2 and comprises of similar grassland habitat. There are areas of willow-dominated woodland around the edges which have little understorey though there is some balsam (the only seen on site). There is a depression within the woodland where ash is dominant. There is a line of mature trees between the two fields in this section.
4. Section 4 is more varied than the previous ones; it is more woodland- and scrub- dominated with dense scrub in particular beneath the wires comprised of 'coppiced' blackthorn, hazel and alder with bramble scrub and scattered mature trees. There are areas of more mature broadleaved woodland around the edges with signs of unofficial paths and littering. These have an understorey of mosses, ferns, ivy, herb-robert with some dog's mercury and lords-and-ladies.
Within this section there is an area of remnant wet meadow with scattered oaks and ash. The meadow is becoming rank due to no lack of grazing (there is no fencing in this section) but has frequent meadowsweet, hogweed and moss and is bordered by scrubby trees. A fox and woodcock were seen here.
There is supposedly another open area further to the east in this section but it has reverted to scrub as far as it's possible to tell.
5. Section 5 is outside of the SINC but is a wet meadow of higher biodiversity value than any of the grassland within it and there is no physical boundary between the two. This is an extensive marshy grassland field with dense areas of fleabane, meadowsweet and orchids throughout a tussocky cocksfoot-dominated sward.

Bridgend SINC Survey

Points

1. Lots of dead trees in this area – maybe as a result of run-off from large dung heap?
2. Area of standing water beneath trees – at risk of run-off from dung heap.
3. Japanese knotweed.
4. Lots of litter and broken trampoline.
5. Fly tipping.
6. Dumped garden waste.
7. Dense scrub underneath wires.
8. Himalayan balsam.

Fauna seen

Blue Tit, Magpie, Great Tit, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Nuthatch, Wren, Collared Dove, Woodpigeon, Woodcock, Jay, Dunnock, Redwing, Goldfinch, Mistle Thrush, Red Fox, Grey Squirrel, Mole.

Conclusion

The site appears to qualify as a SINC due to the quality of the woodland, scrub and potentially the grassland habitat features present. There are other potential qualifying factors that may well be present such as bats but it was not possible to ascertain that at the time of survey. The grassland itself should be surveyed at a more suitable time so that a more accurate assessment of its quality can be made.

In terms of management, it appears that it would benefit from a decrease in grazing intensity and some management of the scrub, particularly where it is encroaching on the wet meadow in section 4. Management of Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam would be beneficial as currently neither is very extensive so it would be possible to eradicate them relatively easily. The slurry at the western end is a potential negative factor on the quality of the SINC, as is the fly-tipping along the road. The continued cutting of scrub beneath the wires will maintain habitat potentially good for dormice – surveys are recommended.

It would be worth adding the meadow in section 5 into the SINC as it would enhance its overall value.



Llety Brongu

12/03/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

The owner of Ty'n-y-Waun SINC is the tenant here but claims he has no landowner contact details.

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The majority of the SINC consists of a mixture of wet woodland on the flatter land alongside the Llynfi and its tributary and drier woodland on the steeper slopes. The wet woodland is comprised of a range of native broadleaved trees including alder, willow, silver birch with native ground flora including opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage, marsh-marigold, hemlock water-dropwort and meadowsweet. In places there are dense stands of yellow flag iris and areas of standing water. The drier slopes have more hazel, showing signs of once being coppiced, holly and some mature pedunculate oaks along the tops of the slope. Ground flora here includes bluebells, lesser celandine, wood sorrel and occasional pignut. In many places there is little scrub layer but there are areas where there is dense bramble beneath the canopy. Throughout the woodland there is a good amount of fallen deadwood. Some of the larger trees have potential for supporting bats.

The water quality of the Llynfi river running through the site appears to be good enough to support fish, freshwater invertebrates and species such as kingfisher and dipper. There are a couple of spots beneath bridges that look ideal nesting sites for the latter. There is however a fair amount of litter along the banks in places.

The woodland to the south of the railway line is bordering two fields of semi-improved rush pasture which were very wet at the time of survey (it was difficult to assess how typical this was given the amount of rain recently). There was no grazing at the time of survey but there is nothing to prevent livestock entering the woodland. It would benefit the SINC to fence this boundary and ideally a couple of metres into the field to provide an extra buffer.

There is evidence of Himalayan balsam throughout, with it being particularly dense in the areas of wettest woodland where it is likely to be impacting on native ground flora (it was difficult to assess the density at this time of year). There are also smaller areas of Japanese Knotweed along the banks of the river as well as occasional Montbretia within the woodland. There are signs of fly-tipping, particularly along the roadside that borders the northeaster part of the SINC. There is also dumping of garden waste where a row of houses overlooks the SINC. Trees here have clearly been cut back to allow more light to reach the houses. The horse yard alongside the river is a potential source of pollution and nutrient enrichment with manure clearly being thrown over the fence onto the river bank. In order to improve the quality of the SINC it is recommended that the INNS and fly-tipping be dealt with.

Fauna seen

Blue Tit, Great Tit, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Nuthatch, Wren, Chaffinch, House Sparrow.

Conclusion

The site still appears to qualify as a SINC in its current condition but its deterioration could be limited by fencing off the woodland to prevent ingress from grazing animals, and removal of invasives and litter/garden waste. Communication with adjacent landowners might improve their appreciation of the value of the site and decrease deleterious activities. Some small scale coppicing/thinning in places would improve the woodland quality by increasing the structural diversity. Some of the felled wood could be used to create an artificial otter holt.

Manor Farm Fields

12/12/19

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

Site was viewed from outside as owner's home address is unknown. Resident of one of the houses overlooking the fields say that curlew are still present in cold weather in the winter.

Conclusion

The site appears to qualify as a SINC as curlew are reportedly still using the fields. The fields themselves appeared to be grazed and improved. Small area of woodland, hedgerows and stone walls are still present.

Moor Farm

05/02/20

Sunny, cold

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

The site consists of a mosaic of closely grazed common land, damp and marshy grassland separated by blocks and strips of wet woodland and scrub. The main area of common (area 3 on map) is closely grazed with 10 horses present at the time of survey and signs of cattle. Hay had been put out for the horses; potentially leading to areas of poaching. The sward was very short throughout and it was difficult to assess floral diversity though it looks

Bridgend SINC Survey

suitable for grassland fungi. Throughout the common there are patches of semi-mature woodland especially along the numerous ditches and streams and the main river. Some areas support anthills; mainly on land towards the river.

The field that looked potentially the most suitable (1 on the map) was semi-improved grassland that had been grazed by horses. The sward was fairly short at the time of survey with numerous meadow pipits feeding throughout (not seen anywhere else on site). There was more floral diversity and few negative indicators. There are some damp areas with meadowsweet, devil's-bit scabious and selfheal present and some fen-like patches (see photos) in the north-west corner. The boundaries are a mixture of scrub and over-mature hedgerows/tree lines (hazel, blackthorn, bramble) with some mature standards. There are some encroaching blackthorn saplings but not very many. The north-eastern corner is separated by a fence and is dominated by scrub, mostly bramble. There is a gravelly stream along the eastern boundary which appears clean but with some Himalayan balsam.

The adjacent field to this (2 on map) is a closely-grazed field that is bordered by hedges of bramble, blackthorn and hazel. The stream running along the eastern side is mostly surrounded by bramble and where it passes under the road there were signs of American mink and otters. This area looks as if it could support grassland fungi.

Area D consists of 2 fields that are separated from the main common by a semi-mature broadleaved woodland dominated by ash and alder. There is a track along the river that joins the two fields. These fields are less tightly grazed than the others and shows more signs of improvement (docks, creeping buttercup).

Areas 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10 are all semi-improved grassland with little floristic diversity visible and with varying amounts of soft rush. They all have wetter areas with standing water in places which often had frogspawn present. The fields were bordered by wet woodlands and tree lines and small amounts of flailed hedge. A number of the wooded boundaries had streams running through them.

Area 11 was not accessible from the western half of the SINC and is owned by Moor Farm (as is Field 1). It is a semi-improved grassland with areas that are closer to being improved with dock, soft rush and creeping buttercup. There are signs that it is grazed by cattle. There are numerous issues and flushes/ditches throughout this area but there is little floristic diversity within them. It is predominantly an open area with remnant field boundaries – lines of oak, alder and blackthorn.

Fauna seen

Otter (signs), Molehills, Fox (signs), American Mink (signs), Grey Squirrel, Common Frog, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin, Green Woodpecker, Wren, Carrion Crow, Grey Wagtail, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Meadow Pipit, Buzzard, Herring Gull, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Magpie, Jay, Woodcock, Long-tailed Tit.

Conclusion

The site overall almost certainly meets SINC criteria for its mosaic of habitats though some sections (notable area 11 in the east) are not currently of SINC quality on their own – they show too many signs of agricultural improvement. There are some fields that, as far as can be ascertained at the time of survey, host a more diverse sward and others probably would support grassland fungi. We recommend surveying for these features at appropriate times of year. The areas of wet woodland and scrub offer good habitat though in some places there are signs of over-grazing. Overall the site would probably benefit from a slight reduction in grazing pressure.



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Newton Burrows

19/02/20

Cold, rain

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

The SINC is predominantly also a SSSI so only the 3 parcels of land not under this designation were surveyed. These are labelled as A (furthest west), B and C (furthest east). No landowner details available.

Area A is a triangular area of short-turfed grassland that is used as a carpark. It is well-used by dog walkers with subsequent fouling. It becomes sand dune habitat where the SSSI begins. The southern edge of the SINC land is an artificially created sea wall with large boulders on the sea front, gravel parking area on top and a vegetated bank leading down to the flat area that comprises the majority of the site.

As far as can be told by the time of year, the grassy area has a relatively poor floral diversity though there are low-growing perennial herbs in some areas, including buckshorn plantain, common whitlowgrass, dove's-foot cranesbill and yarrow, and should be surveyed again in late spring/early summer. The bank has slightly more visible floral diversity with evening-primrose, ragwort, red campion, hoary mustard etc.

Area B is a rectangular piece of amenity grassland with abundant molehills. There is little floral diversity visible which is probably exacerbated by the apparent leaving of arisings when mowing. There is slightly more floral diversity on the slopes with low-growing perennials such as dove's-foot cranesbill, ribwort plantain. There are paths across and around the site and dog fouling throughout. There are a small number of small patches of bramble scrub retained on the slopes, one of which was occupied by a stonechat at the time of survey. The southern and eastern boundaries of the grassland border the SSSI and the encroaching bramble, dewberry, blackthorn and bracken is cut back regularly. These edge habitats (particularly on the eastern edge and the small section of south-facing boundary) are potentially good for basking reptiles though given the extent of suitable habitat in the adjacent SSSI it is probably insignificant. There is a small area of Japanese knotweed in the north-eastern corner.

Area C is a small section of broadleaved woodland and scrub straddling a narrow access road around the caravan park. The piece of land above the road is no longer showing any ruderal herbs (see previous survey) but is dominated by dense bramble, some bracken, clematis and scattered hazel coppice along with a small number of large mature ash trees. There is some rubbish introduced over the boundary from the caravan park.

The southern side of the road is hazel coppice (some of which are large in diameter) with very occasional ash, willow and elder and bramble. There is little scrub layer in most of this area and would benefit from reinstating coppicing. The ground flora comprises ivy, lords-and-ladies, bluebells, hart's-tongue fern and some Montbretia. There are well-used informal paths, signs of den-building and litter (especially along the roadside).

Fauna seen

Molehills, Grey Squirrel, Rabbit (signs), Woodpigeon, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Herring Gull, Collared Dove, Carrion Crow, House Sparrow, Stonechat, Goldfinch.

Conclusion

The 3 separate areas are of varying quality. Area C certainly is still of SINC quality though would benefit from reinstating coppicing. Area A could qualify due to the low-growing herbaceous perennial plants and should be surveyed later in the year to assess floral diversity more thoroughly. Area B does not look as if it is of sufficient quality to be classified as a SINC. It would need a cutting regime more akin to that of a hay meadow with an early and late summer cut with the arisings removed.

Litter removal would be beneficial throughout and the Japanese knotweed in Area B should be removed.

North Eastern Dunes

27/01/20

Cold, cloudy

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Alex Gorman, Jade Cooper

Notes

The SINC as a whole consists predominantly of semi-improved grassland on fixed sand dunes, dense scrub, bracken and improved grassland with small areas of semi-mature woodland. Only the 3 small areas not covered by the Kenfig SSSI were assessed. The largest section is centred around the dwelling to the northeast. This is partially unmodified fixed dunes with little to no bare sand and areas of dense bramble and blackthorn scrub. However within this are 2 or 3 fields very heavily grazed by horses and of little ecological value. A large circular track has been created by an excavator digging away the vegetation in order to create an area in which to exercise horses. Whether this should have been done is unclear but it has created habitat for species of invertebrate that relies on bare sand and also some good edge habitat which could benefit basking reptiles. There is occasional tipping of garden waste here.

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The easternmost section is a small area of woodland and scrub between the Afon Cynffig SINC and the road. It consists of bramble and bracken scrub and alder-dominated woodland. The alders are mainly of uniform age but there are scattered mature specimens of alder and ash. The understorey of the woodland is dominated by bramble with lords-and-ladies, lesser celandine, yellow archangel and some bluebells. There is a lot of litter here, probably deposited when the river floods its banks, including needles. There is a lot of Himalayan balsam beneath the trees and scrub as well as a patch of Japanese knotweed. A small modified stream runs through here and into the river; at the time of survey it was polluted by grey water (from the nearby waterworks?).

The final section, just south across the road from here is dominated by dense blackthorn scrub along the road with willowherb and bramble beneath the wires initially – this turns to dense bramble and then blackthorn. The diversity of this area will be improved as and when the blackthorn is pushed back by Western Power. There is a triangle of land (no physical boundary) here that is not within the SINC but would probably improve the overall diversity of it as it is a more open grassy, tussocky habitat with low bramble and bracken scrub.

Fauna seen

Herring Gull, Grey Wagtail, Magpie, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Sparrowhawk, Robin, Wren, Rabbit, Red Fox, Mole, Bramble gall (*Diastrophus rubi*), Oakmarble gall (*Andricus kollari*), Orange Brain Fungus.

Conclusion

Part of the site still qualifies as a SINC but it is probably worth removing the fields around the house as these are currently of very little value. The woodland area would benefit from removal of invasive species and litter and the scrubby area would benefit from some selective thinning. The sand dunes are fixed but support a range of typical species and may support other qualifying species that it was not possible to survey at this time of year (e.g. reptiles).

North of Pyle

08/01/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

The landowner still lives at the same address but it is now owned by Vernon Hearse. Site is open access – he said we are free to visit whenever and he would like to see the SINC citation. He was aware that it was protected in some way but thought it was only because of the presence of the coke ovens.

The site consists mainly of mixed broadleaved woodland and scrub with a river running through it. The woodland is varied with the eastern end consisting of a small amount of wet woodland adjacent to the river leading to an elevated area with larger trees with an understorey of holly, ivy and ferns. There are typical woodland floor indicator species such as lesser celandine while the woodland itself is made up of a mixture of broadleaved trees including ash, hazel, birch, oak and alder. This eastern end contains the confluence of 2 streams which at the time of survey had frequent dipper activity and signs of repeated use by otters with spraints of varying ages present on a rock where one of the streams passes beneath the railway line. There are houses quite close to the left bank in this area with evidence of some garden escapes such as Montbretia. The wetter area of woodland shows signs of dumping of garden waste and there is frequent Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed along with litter.

Further west the woodland is younger and more willow-dominated with an understorey of bramble, Himalayan balsam and ferns with some very wet areas at the time of survey. There are more signs of garden waste here. This section is adjacent to an area of amenity grassland with distinct patches of woodland and scrub containing the coke ovens – this is owned by the same person but is not part of the SINC. On entering this section from Heol-yr-Orsaf there is a significant area fenced off due to the treatment of a large patch of Japanese knotweed.

The western end of the reserve has a cycle path running through it and there are significant amount of unofficial paths into the woodland and around the areas that have previously been quarried. There is consequently frequent litter and dog fouling. The woodland here is made up mainly of hazel and willow with signs of previous coppicing with more ash-dominated woodland around the quarried areas. As you move eastwards the woodland becomes more willow-dominated. In this area there are wayleaves beneath the electricity cables which provide valuable open rides with scrubby edges. These add ecological value to the site as a whole.

The western half of the site would benefit from reinstating some hazel coppicing to continue to make it suitable for dormice and the creation and maintenance of more open areas in willow and dense bramble patches. There are also more garden escapes here that should be removed before they become a more significant problem.

Fauna seen

Dipper, magpie, woodpigeon, song thrush, chiffchaff, jay, wren, dunnoek, goldfinch, great tit, carrion crow, robin, blue tit, blackbird, grey squirrel, fox, otter.

Conclusion

Bridgend SINC Survey

The site would benefit from some management to increase the structural diversity of certain areas and the creation of more open ride; it still appears to fulfil the criteria to be classified as a SINC. It would also be improved by some control of garden escapes and other invasive non-native species.

The river itself appears to still be relatively clean and is clearly currently used by dippers and otters so presumably is of sufficient quality to support aquatic invertebrates and fish, though none were seen at the time of survey. The river is likely to act as a corridor and food source for bats while the nearby coke ovens are a potential roosting site. During the previous survey a badger sett was mentioned; it was not seen during this walkover survey but there is no reason to believe it has stopped being used – the seemingly most likely area was north of the river and inaccessible due to the strong flow. The marshy grassland area was not seen during the survey and is likely to have scrubbed over considerably since the previous survey. If remnants of it still exists then scrub clearance would be recommended.

Pant Farm/Hirwaun Common

03/02/20

Overcast, cold

Staff present: Kerry Rogers, Vaughn Matthews

Notes

This SINC is made up of a mosaic of damp semi-improved grassland, scattered scrub and some dense *Juncus* and bracken in places. There are streams, ditches and pools throughout. It has been recently grazed by sheep and horses; over-grazed in places but generally not to the detriment of the site as a whole. All areas are edges with lines of mature trees (mainly oak).

The largest section of the SINC (area 2 on map) ranges from heavily grazed sward with scattered *Juncus* to one with more heath-like (MG24) sward further south. There is very high field vole activity throughout the areas of denser long grasses and *Juncus*. The common is edged with gorse and bramble but there is not much incursion. There are a number of small pools (point 2) which contained frogspawn at the time of survey. The south-eastern corner of this area consists of a gorse and grassland mosaic with some wet flushes. The field boundary to the east (point 3) is a stream with a high bank and treeline (old field boundary).

Area 1 on the map was less heavily grazed and exhibited flora more typical of wet heath. It contained wet flushes and ditches along the boundary, all of which were suitable water vole habitat. The southern edge was drier and featured anthills and a gorse bank along the stream. The field to the north-west of this area (out of the SINC – point 4 on the map) looks worthy of being included and could potentially support water voles.

Area 3 is a mosaic of dense gorse scrub and patches of marshy grassland. There is a large area of dense bracken which is shading out almost all other vegetation and although ponies clearly have had access to it they have not affected its density. There are signs that attempts have been made to burn the gorse in places.

Area 4 straddles the stream, which has trees and scrub along its banks. The main habitat is an open damp grassland with a few ericoides visible which is more heavily grazed in the centre though there no signs of sheep, only ponies. There are some patches of dense *Juncus*. The large bowl to the north-west (outside of the SINC) looks worthy of survey.

There is evidence of Himalayan balsam along the main streams and ditches throughout the SINC and one patch of Japanese knotweed (point 1 on map) which should be treated before it becomes a problem.

Fauna seen

Otter (signs), Rabbit (signs), Field Vole (signs), Common Frog, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blue Tit, Robin, Kestrel, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wren, Carrion Crow, Grey Wagtail, Dipper, Yellow Brain Fungus.

Conclusion

The site certainly still qualifies as a SINC due to the presence of indicator species within the marshy grassland. The level of grazing appears to be appropriate with few signs of over-stocking and no negative indicators seen (dock, clovers). There also appears to be large areas of suitable habitat adjacent to the current SINC boundary that should be considered for inclusion. There is one area that consists predominantly of dense bracken which would benefit from some management and there is also Japanese knotweed present in at least one location (see map) and Himalayan balsam along most of the waterways. It was difficult to assess the density of this growth at this time of year however.

We would recommend re-surveying in summer to get a better idea of the quality of the grassland (extent of Devil's-bit scabious etc.) and also to survey more thoroughly for water voles as the habitat appears suitable in a number of areas within the SINC and outside it. No signs were found during a limited search.

Bridgend SINC Survey



Rych Point

20/01/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews

Notes

The site has not changed significantly since the last survey; the rocky outcrop remains with frequent rockpools throughout which all appeared to support a wide range of plants and invertebrates. The edge of the SINC where it meets the grassy area is made up predominantly of large blocks of rubble and concrete, presumably to act as protection from erosion. It is rather an eyesore however.

Some litter but not very much – there were people collecting litter further along the beach so they might have cleaned the SINC earlier in the day.

Fauna seen

Carion Crow. Honeycomb Worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*), Common Coral Weed (*Corallina officinalis*).

Conclusion

Bridgend SINC Survey

The site appears to qualify as a SINC as there are no apparent changes since the last survey. The outcrop remains unmodified and there are numerous typical intertidal species present in and around the frequent rockpools such as the honeycomb worm and common coral weed.

Similar to the previous survey, we would recommend considering the removal of rubble that acts as erosion prevention and using more locally typical rock where possible. Also an interpretation panel might allow people to appreciate the ecological value of the site.

St. James' Church Wood

16/12/19

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

The woodland consists of a range of native tree species of varying ages. There are some large standards, canopy gaps and deadwood. The understorey was difficult to assess at the time of the survey but there are some species visible that are typical of woodland ground flora such as dog's mercury and lesser celandine. Some large ash trees are present which may need to be removed if ash dieback is present. There are numerous well-used informal paths throughout the woodland.

The areas of grassland are still managed as amenity grassland and appear to be well-used.

The river appears to be of suitable quality to support otters though no signs were seen during the survey and the presence of fish could not be established. There is some litter in the river and a field heavily poached by pigs towards the northern end of the site is a potential source of run-off. Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed are present along sections of the river bank and could lead to destabilisation of the banks.

There are some signs of anti-social behaviour – dog fouling in the amenity grasslands, litter, dumping of garden waste/general rubbish over the back of gardens above woodland and numerous signs of arson in the woodlands at the base of trees – one of these appears to have contributed to the felling of a large ash tree (see picture).

Some signs of INNS – Himalayan balsam on river banks and in some areas of the woodland. One large area of Japanese knotweed on river bank (approximately SS82358262) and scattered shrubs of privet and Himalayan honeysuckle towards northern end. There are also laurel and box on the opposite banks.

Fauna seen

Blue Tit, Magpie, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Robin, Wren, Grey Squirrel.

Conclusion

The site appears to qualify as a SINC due to the quality of the woodland and river features present. The secondary features listed previously are still present though were not very extensive. There are other potential qualifying factors that may well be present such as bats but it was not possible to ascertain that at the time of survey.

Stormy Down

04/03/20

Rainy, cold

Staff present: Kerry Rogers, Vaughn Matthews

Notes

Stormy Down is a large SINC straddling the M4 and partially containing the Stormy Down geological SSSI. The largest section of the site, to the south of the M4 consists of an expanse of bracken-dominated common. In the majority of places this is extremely dense with little other than bramble and dewberry present. It is slightly less dense towards the road with some evidence of orchid shoots developing and small numbers of other flowering species that suggest that it used to be a woodland (celandine, dog's mercury, wood sage, lords and ladies etc.). In a couple of areas there has clearly been some management – grass and bracken has been cut to provide extra green space for neighbouring properties and an area on the common is clearly being used as storage for silage bales.

The scrub is extremely dense towards in the eastern end of this area where it surrounds a small stand of mature sycamores. These have features suitable for bats (fissures, hazard beams) and there are 2 small water bodies beneath them. There are other small pieces of remnant woodland around the edges of the SINC comprised of a number of native broadleaved trees (oak, ash, hawthorn, blackthorn) and with AWI species such as bluebells present.

Bridgend SINC Survey

There are numerous invasive non-native species throughout with some dense areas of Japanese knotweed and extensive patches of Himalayan balsam amongst others (Montbretia, cotoneaster, bamboo). Closer to the M4 there is more *Molinia* and gorse with broom common over a relatively small area. There are signs of previous burns here with the fenceline blackened.

Within this section between the M4 and the A48 there is a solar farm where the quarry used to be. This is encircled by dense scrub and young trees. More trees have recently been planted. The solar farm itself appears to have very little value for wildlife. The track that runs along the western edge of the solar farm is heavily used by fly-tippers and has evidently been used repeatedly for tipping manure and wood shavings from horse stables. It has clearly been going on for some time and is still happening as there very recent tracks from a large tractor. It is encroaching on to the SINC and is a significant pollution risk (see photos).

North of M4 the habitat is of better quality with more signs of management. To the west it is *Molinia*-dominated but with remnants of heath vegetation (*Calluna*, bilberry) and scattered bracken and gorse. It appears to have been more recently or more regularly burnt which has removed thatching but conversely has prevented ericoids and bilberry becoming more established. The eastern side appears to be on made up ground and is a mixture of wetland vegetation and dense scrub. There is frequent signs of use by scrambler bikes.

The small area to the south of the A48 appears to be the site of old military buildings with entrances to at least one underground structure still present and accessible. The piece of land is mainly taken over by bramble and gorse scrub with areas of neutral grassland in between. The majority of this appears to be on made-up ground though is an area of grassland to the south-east which may be on natural substrate. Some of the open areas offer nectaring for invertebrates with flowering plants being apparent (knapweed, st. john's wort etc.) and it would be sheltered and warm due to the south-facing aspect and surrounding scrubby trees. There is good potential for bats here as the 2 large houses appear to have bat bricks near their roofs and the underground bunkers could provide roosting sites and the invertebrates would be a good nearby food source.

Fauna seen

Fox (signs), Mole (signs), Rabbit (signs), Buzzard, House Sparrow, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Robin, Great Tit, Stonechat, Dunnock, Wren, Carrion Crow, Herring Gull, Grey Shoulder-knot, Yellow Brain Fungus.

Conclusion

The majority of the site is no longer of SINC quality due to lack of management and encroachment of INNS. If suitable management were introduced then the large area south of the motorway could be restored. It is in need of bracken rolling and introduction of cattle grazing. Burning would also be beneficial though probably unfeasible due to its location. INNS need controlling and fly-tipping managed in some way. Appropriate measures to limit the use of the common for dumping/storage of agricultural materials/waste need to be undertaken.

The piece of land north of the M4 possibly still qualifies as a SINC as long as it isn't burned too regularly. The small area south of the A48 doesn't necessarily qualify at the moment but if work was done to improve the underground features for bats (e.g. installation of grilles, stabilisation of temperature etc.) then it could qualify for its importance to bats.

Ty'n-Y-Waun

12/03/20

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Kerry Rogers, Vaughn Matthews

Notes

As at the time of the previous survey the SINC is a mixture of rush pasture, scrub and woodland. The quality of the rush pasture varies from field to field with some showing obvious signs of attempts at improving them. Most are clearly cut and grazed at certain times of year apart from one area in the centre which is starting to scrub over; this field is an ash/birch woodland over rush pasture; some of which has been clearfelled. The fields are very wet throughout with signs of nutrient enrichment (creeping buttercup) with one area turning to fen. The field to the northwest is closer to neutral grassland and is of reasonable quality. A stream runs through the centre of these marshy fields with frogspawn and water-crowfoot present.

The northern boundary is scrubby woodland with large standards while the woodland that follows the old railway cutting(?) is varying in type and quality. At its northern end it is more birch-dominated before becoming poorly-structured and comprising mainly of hazel coppice stools with Japanese knotweed and cherry laurel present. There may be suitable dormouse habitat here. Further south however, the woodland merges into oak woodland with a holly understorey and some hazel along with small patches of bilberry and heather. Some of the oaks are large standards and there are potential features for bats; indeed the SINC as a whole provides shelter, roosting sites, forage and potential flight lines for bats. The stream that runs along the railway cutting has some Himalayan balsam present and mine drainage pollution.

Fauna seen

Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Goldcrest, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Woodpigeon, Wren, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Jackdaw, Woodcock, Great Tit, Robin, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Carrion Crow, Common Shrew (dead), Frogspawn, Fox Moth caterpillar.

Conclusion

Bridgend SINC Survey

The site overall still qualifies as a SINC due to its native woodland features while the grassland is not of SINC quality in itself it does add value to the site as a whole and could be improved by decreasing nutrients and maintaining low intensity cattle grazing as well as selective scrub control. The woodlands could be improved in some areas by light thinning/coppicing, particularly in the north eastern corner. INNS control along the railway cutting is also advised; particularly as it is the start of the catchment (in both directions – the stream flows either way out of the cutting) so could be the start of catchment-scale removal.

Waunbant Road (north)

4/12/19

Cold, sunny

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

The site still consists of a mosaic of grassland and scrub with more mature woodland around the boundaries. The grassland appears to still support a typical range of flora (Black Knapweed, St' John's Wort, Agrimony, Selfheal and occasional Devil's-bit Scabious) though some of the grassier areas are becoming a bit rank and would benefit from a late summer cut.

The scrubby boundary consists of mainly blackthorn, bramble, hawthorn and some willow. Blackthorn and bramble is encroaching from around the edges though an attempt is made to resist this by cutting back with a tractor, though not always effectively (see pictures).

Within the meadow there are islands of bramble-dominated scrub which are a feature of the site but, as with the boundaries, they are spreading into the grassland areas. Similar management is being implemented as around the edges.

The meadow may be being lightly grazed by horses as there are signs that the woodland in the south-eastern corner is being made stock-proof (Blackthorn laid horizontally and a small section of barbed wire fence).

The woodland area consists of younger willow-dominated woodland with bramble and fern understorey which gradually transitions to more mature woodland with ash standards and large mature hazel coppice stools. This area of woodland has limited ground flora (mainly ivy with occasional violets) as there is little light penetrating the canopy. Reinstating the coppicing in this small area would be beneficial. Deadwood is present in the woodland areas and the ground in the very south-eastern corner is damper than elsewhere.

The eastern boundary is made up of old coppice stools – the ones nearest the fence line are being flailed and would benefit ecologically (and aesthetically) from being laid. There is a small amount of hedge laid along the southern hedge bank which could also be extended – this hedge would not only potentially benefit small mammals such as dormice but also reptiles, if present, as the south-facing bank would be exposed to more sunlight.

The narrow stream running along the southern boundary is heavily shaded but the water appears clean and there are no INNS visible.

No INNS were seen elsewhere on site but there was some fly tipping along the hedge bank along the southern boundary.

There is no landowner listed on the SINC citation so site was assessed from public footpath running through it.

Fauna seen

Robin, Blackbird, Dunnock, Cobalt Crust.

Conclusion

The site appears to still qualify as a SINC though it would benefit from more sympathetic scrub control and either light grazing or a hay cut taken to remove some of the ranker grasses. It is difficult to effectively assess the quality of the grassland at this time of year however. There appears to be little change in the described status of the scrub and woodland habitats.

Waunbant Road (triangle)

16/12/19

Cold, overcast

Staff present: Vaughn Matthews, Megan Howells

Notes

Showed around site by tenant grazier. Land is owned by Penycastell.

Bridgend SINC Survey

Site is grazed by one pony all year round. Field is cut for hay usually but hasn't been cut this year.

Field is described as 3 fields in SINC citation but one fence has been removed.

No sign that the fields have been improved though grazier said he spread straw/manure from nearby stables once but that it hasn't made a difference. Difficult to assess status of grassland due to time of year but it didn't look particularly improved. Some fleabane, devil's-bit scabious, selfheal and meadowsweet present. Apparently not as much DBS as there used to be. Grazier removes ragwort due to pony grazing but only a handful of plants present (5 last year). Apparently there are 'leopard orchids' present too. Some soft rush and localised poaching but it isn't overstocked – apparently he had two ponies on for a while but he needed to supplementary feed so now only keeps one.

Northern boundary consists of scattered trees, scrub and bracken with barbed wire fence. Grazier is pulling small blackthorn saplings to prevent encroachment. Eastern boundary is a hedgeline that the grazier is laying in sections between standard oaks. There is a ditch running along this hedge (partly culverted) which he has dammed in one place to create a small area of standing water. This is apparently to benefit newts that he has found in stone walls on site. Frogs also apparently breed on site – usually in a small area of temporary standing water near the southern fenceline.

There is Japanese knotweed present in 2 corners which are being injected with herbicide every year – appears to be slowly controlling it.

Southern part of SINC along railway line is a mixture of woodland, scrub, bracken and some patches of tussocky Molinia where fence prevents pony grazing. No sign of invasives from viewpoint within field.

Apparently there is a fox den in the part of the SINC within railway's authority.

Fauna seen

Shrew sp. (heard), Fox (smell, food remains), Grey Squirrel, Mole(hills), Rabbit (droppings), Magpie, Robin, Wren, Blackbird.

Conclusion

Previous survey (2011) suggests that grassland would not meet SINC criteria. There appears to be more floral diversity now than there was reported then but impossible to accurately assess at this time of year. As also stated on the previous survey, the woodland and hedgerows might qualify under woodland criteria.

Survey during the summer recommended.