



## The state of common land in Wales – an indicative study

### Cyflwr tir comin Cymru - astudiaeth arwyddol

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Reform of the management of common land in England and Wales is currently being considered in Westminster and new legislation is expected to follow. Reform has been driven primarily by (i) the need to secure attainment of the UK Government's target to have over 95% of SSSIs by area in England in favourable condition by 2010<sup>1</sup> and (ii) the wish to facilitate entry by commoners into agri-environment schemes, and so help secure the sustainable agriculture management of common land in general.

Various reports in the last fifteen years<sup>2</sup> have set out the need for improved management and protection of our common land; however, there are few current data available to give a clear view of the condition of commons in Wales. This report is an attempt to collate sources on common land in Wales and to assess the state of a small number of commons in Wales. These commons are not a representative sample of commons in Wales; rather, they are presented as a series of illustrative case studies. We also draw some conclusions for the implementation of the new legislation in Wales.

The report was funded by CCW and compiled by RSPB Cymru. Survey work was carried out by Mick Green, and CCW staff provided data and information. The views presented in this report are those of RSPB Cymru.

## Background

Common land is important as an agricultural, archaeological, environmental, recreational and cultural resource. Common land grazing is part of the farming tradition in Wales and many farms rely on hill grazing to be financially viable. Many of our best-loved landscapes are commons and they provide varied habitats for many of our rare and declining species of wildlife.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Wales – by 2010 95% of international sites in favourable condition, by 2015 95% of Welsh SSSIs in favourable condition and by 2026, all sites to be in favourable condition - "Environment Strategy for Wales" 2006, Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>2</sup> *A survey of the biological characteristics and management of Common Land*, Rural Surveys Research Unit, University of Wales Aberystwyth, 1990–1994 (various authors); *Living Commons*, Nick Thomas, RSPB Cymru, 1999; *Agricultural Use and Management of Common land* – report by the Stakeholder Working Group, April 2003, Defra.

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the management issues and wildlife value of Welsh common land please refer to *Living Commons*, Nick Thomas, RSPB Cymru 1999.

There are 175,000 ha of common land in Wales (more than 8% of the total land area) and about 45% (79,000 ha) is designated as SSSI.<sup>4</sup> Ensuring that these sites of national and international importance are appropriately managed to protect the interest on them is central to meeting the Welsh Assembly Government's and the wider EU's biodiversity targets<sup>5</sup>. Yet every indication is that a high proportion of features are in an unfavourable condition and therefore not adequately protecting the interest for which those sites were designated.

With the changes to agricultural support through reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, farm incomes are likely to be under increasing pressure. Agri-environment payments are likely to become a more attractive option for many farmers, particularly in more remote areas where opportunities for diversification are limited. Historically, common land has been difficult to enter into agri-environment schemes, primarily because it is hard to secure mutual agreement between the various graziers. The new legislation provides a mechanism to help commoners come together to implement the majority will and therefore provides a significant opportunity to enter commons into agri-environment schemes.

## **Information on all commons in Wales**

Summary data on commons in Wales have been collated to provide politicians and others with the best available information, ordered by political constituency. However, amalgamating different data sets<sup>6</sup> has not been straightforward and there are some areas where it has not been possible to resolve inconsistencies. The data below (set out in more detail at Annex A) should therefore be regarded as indicative rather than exact.

Our initial aim was to use existing data held by CCW on the condition of features on SACs, SPAs and SSSIs in Wales, and to overlap this onto common land boundaries to gain an insight into the condition of those commons which hold a designation. However, it was felt that this approach would not give us a useful, robust data set as it was impossible to marry the two data sets. This was as a result of differences in boundaries – some large commons containing more than one SSSI,

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<sup>4</sup> Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with many sites also designated as of international importance under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

<sup>5</sup> The Sixth Environment Action Programme of the European Community 2002-2012

<sup>6</sup> Primarily from "The survey of the biological characteristics and management of Common Land" produced by the Rural Surveys Research Unit at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and data made available by CCW on SSSIs; 1987-92

some large SSSIs containing more than one common, boundaries overlapping - coupled with not being able to identify where interest features are located within the SSSI/common.

There are 57 SSSIs in Wales that are wholly or mostly (80% - 100% by area) on common land. Information was available at the time of writing on the condition of the features on 38 of the potential 57. Thus, we are able to provide information on the condition of these commons from the SSSIs information, as there is a reasonable level of confidence that data on the SSSIs are relevant to the common land. The 38 SSSIs contained a total of 174 features. Of these, 49 are in unfavourable condition, 23 in favourable condition, and the condition of 102 is unknown (see table below).

<b>Condition Status:</b>	<b>Favourable Condition</b>	<b>Unfavourable Condition</b>	<b>Unknown Condition</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>All SSSI Features</b>	23	49	102	174
<b>Geological Features</b>	5	7	6	18
<b>Species Features</b>	1	3	67	71
<b>Habitat Features</b>	17	39	29	85

Based on data from 38 of 57 SSSIs which comprise 80% or more common land

There are 344 commons in Wales that are 80% - 100% by area SSSIs. This is a significant hectareage of land - more than 40,500 ha (22% of all common land in Wales), 61% of the designated common land in Wales. However, whilst a number of them contain a significant number of different SSSIs, or are part of a much larger SSSI, it has not been possible to draw any conclusions in the short time frame of the study on the condition of the part of the SSSI that is on common land.

The Brecon & Radnor constituency contains by far the largest area of common land in Wales, with more than 63,500 ha. Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Carmarthen East & Dinefwr and Ceredigion all have between 12,000 and 15,000 ha. Montgomeryshire, Gower, Clwyd West, Clwyd South, Conwy and Preseli Pembrokeshire have between 5,000 and 10,000 ha. Common land is not found only in the 'rural' constituencies - there is a significant area of common land in many of the south Wales valleys, such as Torfaen and Caerphilly, and also in Wrexham.

### **Case study commons in Wales**

As we were unable to produce condition information for SSSI commons in Wales, it was felt that it would be useful to get some qualitative information by undertaking a number of case studies. Six

commons were chosen for case study assessments in the summer of 2005 to illustrate wider management or condition issues and are relatively spread out across Wales (see table below). All are designated as SSSIs apart from Uwchgwyrfai.

Name	County	CL number	Area (ha)	% of common designated SSSI	Main conservation interest	Size of sample (ha)
Mynydd Llangyndeyrn	Carmarthenshire	CL20	85	100	Bog	85
Old Castle Down.	Vale of Glamorgan	CL32	422 <sup>1</sup>	25 <sup>1</sup>	Calcareous grassland, damp heath	73
Abergwesyn (part)	Brecknockshire	CL116	212	100	Blanket bog	<100
Llandeilo, Rhulen, Llanbedr Hill (part)	Radnorshire	CL11	2780	51.75	Wet heath, pillwort	<100
Comin Uwchgwyrfai (part)	Gwynedd	CL16	1012	0	Dry heath	<100
Penrhosfeilw	Ynys Môn	CL59	91	100	Dry heath, maritime heath	91

<sup>1</sup> The SSSI is part of the larger Ogmere and Old Castle Down common.

### Key issues arising from the case study commons

Of the six sites surveyed only one, Uwchgwyrfai, appeared to have habitat in a favourable condition from a nature conservation perspective. However, even at this site the condition picture is varied and the current minimal grazing, if continued, could result in scrub encroachment. Grazing management is a recurring issue in the study, with several commons under-grazed (Llangyndeyrn, Old Castle Down and Penrhosfeilw) or overgrazed - current or historic - and not showing signs of recovery (Abergwesyn and Llanbedr Hill).

Several reasons are identified as causes of inappropriate grazing levels:

- **Fencing** – commons that are bisected by roads are under-grazed or not grazed at all
- **Lack of graziers** – on some commons there are now only one or two active graziers who consider it economical to stock the common

- **Conflicts of interest** – this can occur both between the graziers themselves (over stock numbers or management) and between commoners and owners (for example over game management versus grazing)
- **Burning** – is an important tool but requires careful planning and management. Burning appears to be occurring at least in part due to accident or vandalism and with little coherent management
- **Shepherding** – many commons are large and contiguous with other open areas so management of grazing is required to ensure that localised over/under-grazing does not occur. The trend towards reduced shepherding due to time and labour constraints, with little day to day management, is an issue.
- **Difficulty in obtaining management agreements** – securing the agreement of all rights-holders has been difficult, if not impossible, and conflicts of interest have deterred many commoners from accessing agri-environment or other conservation agreements with CCW on designated sites (known as Section 15 agreements).

It is hoped that the new legislation could provide a framework to help resolve some of the above issues, but much will depend on the incentives for commoners to form Statutory Commons Councils and enter into management agreements, either with CCW or under an agri-environment scheme.

## **Issues for implementing the new legislation in Wales**

To provide a wider perspective to this study, a small number of informal telephone interviews were carried out with commoners' representatives from the case study commons and a handful of other sites<sup>7</sup>. Whilst this poll is not intended to be a representative survey of commoners across Wales, we believe that the views of these individuals are indicative of some of the issues faced by commoners in managing the land over which they have rights.

- Although many of those interviewed had a role within their grazing associations such as chair or secretary, there was uncertainty about the number of commoners and the number and types of right that are registered for that common.
- Commoners do not receive regular information regarding the management of their common from one source and often felt ill-informed of the issues affecting them. Many of

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<sup>7</sup> Fifteen interviews were conducted along with a number of more informal discussions with those who did not wish to participate directly in the survey.

the commons included in the survey were SSSIs and it is therefore not surprising that CCW was quoted as the most regular and reliable source of information. The owner of the land, Welsh Federation of Commoners and the Assembly's magazine, *Gwlad*, were also cited as sources of information.

- Most had not considered agri-environment schemes, as the obstacles to entry were seen as too high. However several did regard these schemes as a possibility if outside agencies such as CCW or National Park would be able to help facilitate administration.
- Of those who had entered agri-environment schemes (ESA and Tir Cymen) most held positive views, although there was disappointment at the lack of coordination between government/agencies in helping them access new agri-environment schemes when the current ones ended.
- Commoners' views of the environmental state of the common varied, but was more likely to accord with conservationists' views in cases of under-grazing. Concerns regarding recreational use of commons (particularly 4 x 4 and motorbike off-roading) were seen as major environmental threats, as was vandalism caused by uncontrolled burning.
- Although most commoners were aware that legislation was likely to come through which affected them, most had a poor idea of what the Bill contained and *how* it would affect them. When the contents of the Bill were outlined to them views varied widely on whether they would be interested in taking on statutory powers to manage their affairs. The principal concern was whether there were sufficient funds for agri-environment or other management agreements to make the extra administration and work on their part worth the effort.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The data collected during this short four-month study (June – September 2005) provide an insight into the complex nature of common land and its management. The primary message is the lack of a central reliable information source regarding the state of common land in Wales and its management, coupled with the difficulty in drawing robust conclusions from the data sources that do exist, within a short time. Given more time and resources it may well be possible to draw on a greater range of data including aerial photographic survey material. .

The case study assessments and the collation of data support the view that the majority of commons that have nature conservation designations are not being managed sustainably. Our case studies indicate that achieving appropriate grazing levels will be a key component in achieving conservation objectives on common land. It is important to note that this will require a tailor-made, common-by-common approach to ensure that specific issues are addressed - whether this be increased or decreased grazing, or changing from sheep-only grazing to more mixed grazing patterns including cattle/pony grazing. Wider changes in agricultural support mean that it is essential that agri-environment payments are of a sufficient level to ensure that the necessary grazing management can be achieved, particularly in cases where under-grazing is occurring.

RSPB Cymru believes that the proposed legislation has the potential to empower commoners to facilitate better management of common land; however, successful implementation of the legislation will require significant resources, support and advice to Commons Councils.

- The new legislation should help to empower commoners to resolve management issues when Commons Registration Authorities have completed the updating of the registers. It will require significant resources to complete this work within a reasonable timescale, particularly in those counties where there is a large amount of common land
- A source of authoritative information should be set up to inform and advise commoners of the new legislation, management issues and share best practice in setting up new associations
- Additional resources will need to be allocated to ensure that information and practical advice on conservation management is available to all commons. This will of necessity involve site visits from skilled officers
- There is a clear need for the Assembly and its implementation agencies to take a proactive role in assisting commoners to form Statutory Commons Councils if management agreements are

to be reached. Clear direction to this effect needs to be included in the remit letters of Local Authorities, CCW and National Parks in Wales

- Additional resources in agri-environment and Section 15 management agreements will be required to provide adequate incentive for commoners to form the new statutory associations. This must be part of the thinking of the new Rural Development Plan for Wales, with targets and timescales to be set for bringing commons under management agreements
- Monitoring systems should be developed that enable an assessment of the environmental outcomes of the new legislation

# Crynodeb Gweithredol

## Cyflwyniad

Ar hyn o bryd mae gwelliannau i reolaeth tir comin yn Lloegr a Chymru yn cael eu hystyried yn San Steffan a disgwylir deddfwriaeth newydd o ganlyniad. Gwelwyd bod angen gwelliannau'n bennaf (i) oherwydd yr angen i gyrraedd targed Llywodraeth y DU o sicrhau bod dros 95% o SDdGA fesul ardal yn Lloegr mewn cyflwr ffafriol erbyn 2010<sup>8</sup> a (ii) y dymuniad i gynorthwyo cominwyr i ymuno â chynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol, gan helpu felly i sicrhau rheolaeth amaethyddiaeth gynladwy ar dir comin yn gyffredinol.

Yn ystod y pymtheng mlynedd<sup>9</sup> diwethaf mae adroddiadau amrywiol wedi amlygu'r angen am well rheolaeth a gwarchodaeth o'n tir comin; fodd bynnag, ychydig o wybodaeth gyfredol sydd ar gael i roi golwg fanwl o gyflwr tir comin Cymru. Ymgais yw'r adroddiad hwn i gasglu ynghyd ffynonellau ar dir comin Cymru ac i asesu cyflwr nifer fechan o diroedd comin Cymru. Nid yw'r nifer fechan hwn o diroedd comin yn sampl gynrychioladol o diroedd comin Cymru; yn hytrach, cyflwynir y rhain fel cyfres o astudiaethau achos esboniadol. Rydym hefyd yn dod i rai casgliadau ar gyfer gweithredu'r deddfwriaeth newydd yng Nghymru.

Ariannwyd yr adroddiad gan CCGC ac fe'i lluniwyd gan RSPB Cymru. Gwnaed y gwaith arolygu gan Mick Green, a darparwyd y data a'r wybodaeth gan staff CCGC. Safbwyntiau RSPB Cymru a gyflwynir yn yr adroddiad hwn.

## Cefndir

Mae tir comin yn bwysig fel adnodd amaethyddol, archeolegol, amgylcheddol, adloniadol a diwylliannol. Mae pori tir comin yn rhan o draddodiad amaethyddol Cymru ac mae llawer o ffermydd yn dibynnu ar bori mynydd er mwyn bod yn ariannol ddichonadwy. Mae llawer o'n hoff dirluniau yn diroedd comin ac maent yn darparu cynefinoedd amrywiol ar gyfer llawer o'n rhywogaethau prin a rhywogaethau sy'n prinhau.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Yng Nghymru, 95% o safleoedd rhyngwladol mewn cyflwr ffafriol erbyn 2010, 95% o Safleoedd o Ddiddordeb Gwyddonol Arbennig (SDdGA) mewn cyflwr ffafriol erbyn 2015 a phob safle i fod mewn cyflwr ffafriol erbyn 2026 – 'Strategaeth Amgylcheddol ar gyfer Cymru', 2006 Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru.

<sup>9</sup> *A survey of the biological characteristics and management of Common Land*, Uned Ymchwil Arolygon Gwledig, Prifysgol Cymru Aberystwyth, 1990–1994 (amrywiol awduron); *Tiroedd Comin Byw*, Nick Thomas, RSPB Cymru, 1999; *Agricultural Use and Management of Common Land* – adroddiad gan Grwp Gweithredol Rhanddeiliaid, Ebrill 2003, Defra.

<sup>10</sup> Am ragor o wybodaeth ar faterion yn ymwneud â rheolaeth a gwerth tiroedd comin Cymru i fywyd gwyllt dylech gyfeirio at *Diroedd Comin Byw*, Nick Thomas, RSPB Cymru 1999.

Mae 175,000 ha o dir comin yng Nghymru (mwy na 8% o gyfanswm arwynebedd y tir) ac mae oddeutu 45% (79,000 ha) wedi ei ddynodi fel SDdGA.<sup>11</sup> Mae sicrhau bod y safleoedd hyn sydd yn bwysig yn genedlaethol ac yn rhyngwladol yn derbyn rheolaeth briodol i warchod yr hyn sydd o ddiddordeb arnynt yn ganolog i gyfarfod targedau bioamrywiaeth Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru a'r UE ehangach.<sup>12</sup> Serch hyn mae llawer o arwyddion bod cyfran uchel o nodweddion mewn cyflwr anffafriol ac nad ydynt felly yn gwarchod mewn ffordd briodol y buddiannau y dynodwyd y safle o'u herwydd.

Gyda'r newid i gefnogaeth amaethyddol drwy welliannau i'r Polisi Amaeth Cyffredin, mae enillion ffermydd yn debygol o ddod dan bwysau cynyddol. Mae'n debyg y bydd taliadau amaeth-amgylcheddol felly yn opsiwn mwy deniadol i lawer o ffermwyr, yn arbennig mewn ardaloedd mwy anghysbell lle nad oes llawer o gyfle i arallgyfeirio. Yn hanesyddol, bu'n anodd cynnwys tir comin mewn cynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol, yn bennaf oherwydd ei bod yn anodd sicrhau cytundeb rhwng y gwahanol borwyr. Mae'r ddeddfwriaeth newydd yn darparu mecanwaith i helpu cominwyr ddod ynghyd i weithredu dymuniad y mwyafrif ac felly mae'n darparu cyfle arwyddocaol i gynnwys tir comin mewn cynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol.

## **Gwybodaeth am holl diroedd comin Cymru**

Casglwyd ynghyd grynodedb o ddata ar dir comin yng Nghymru i ddarparu gwleidyddion ac eraill gyda'r wybodaeth orau sydd ar gael, yn ôl gorchmynion etholaethau gwleidyddol. Fodd bynnag, nid oedd hi'n hawdd cyfuno gwahanol gyfresi o ddata<sup>13</sup> ac mewn ambell i faes ni fu'n bosibl datrys anghysondebau. Dylid ystyried y data isod (a amlinellir yn fwy manwl yn Atodiad A) felly fel data arwyddol yn hytrach na data manwl gywir.

Ein nod ar y dechrau oedd defnyddio data a oedd yn bodoli eisoes ac yng ngofal CCGC ar gyflwr nodweddion ar ACA, AGA a SDdGA yng Nghymru, a sicrhau bod hwn yn gorymylu ar derfynau tir comin er mwyn ceisio cael golwg ar gyflwr y tiroedd comin hyn sydd â dynodiad. Fodd

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<sup>11</sup> Safle o Ddiddordeb Gwyddonol Arbennig (SDdGA) gyda llawer o safleoedd hefyd wedi eu dynodi fel safleoedd o bwysigrwydd rhyngwladol o dan y Cyfarwyddyd Adar a Chynefinoedd

<sup>12</sup> Chweched Rhaglen Weithredu Amgylcheddol y Gymuned Ewropeaidd 2002-2012.

<sup>13</sup> Yn bennaf o "The survey of the biological characteristics and management of Common Land" a gynhyrwyd gan Uned Ymchwil Arolygon Gwledig Prifysgol Cymru, Aberystwyth a data gafwyd gan CCGC ar SDdGA; 1987-92

bynag, teimlwyd na fyddai'r dull hwn o weithredu yn rhoi i ni gasgliad o ddata defnyddiol a dibynadwy gan ei bod yn amhosibl cyfuno'r ddwy gyfres o ddata. Roedd hyn oherwydd gwahaniaethau yn y terfynau – ambell i dir comin mawr yn cynnwys mwy nag un SDdGA, rhai SDdGA mawr yn cynnwys mwy nag un tir comin, terfynau yn gorymylu – ynghyd â'r ffaith nad oedd modd adnabod lleoliad nodweddion o ddiddordeb o fewn y SDdGA/tir comin.

Mae 57 SDdGA yng Nghymru sydd un ai'n gyfan gwbl neu'n bennaf (80% - 100% yn ôl arwynebedd) ar dir comin. Yn ystod cyfnod ysgrifennu'n adroddiad hwn roedd gwybodaeth ar gael ar gyflwr nodweddion ar 38 o'r 57 potensial. Felly, rydym yn gallu darparu gwybodaeth ar gyflwr y tiroedd comin hyn o'r wybodaeth parthed y SDdGA, gan fod lefel resymol o hyder bod data ar y SDdGA yn berthnasol i'r tir comin. Roedd y 38 SDdGA yn cynnwys cyfanswm o 174 o nodweddion. O'r rhain, mae 49 mewn cyflwr anffafriol, 23 mewn cyflwr ffafriol, ac nid oes gwybodaeth am gyflwr 102 (gweler y tabl isod).

Statws Cyflwr:	Cyflwr Ffafriol	Cyflwr Anffafriol	Cyflwr Anhysbys	Cyfanswm
<b>Pob Nodwedd SDdGA</b>	23	49	102	174
<b>Nodweddion Daearegol</b>	5	7	6	18
<b>Nodweddion Rhywogaeth</b>	1	3	67	71
<b>Nodweddion Cynefin</b>	17	39	29	85

Yn seiliedig ar ddata o 38 o 57 SDdGA sy'n cynnwys 80% neu fwy o dir comin

Mae 344 tir comin yng Nghymru y mae 80% - 100% o'u harwynebedd yn SDdGA. Dyma arwynebedd sylweddol o hectarau – mwy na 40,500 ha (22% o holl dir comin Cymru), 61% o dir comin dynodedig Cymru. Fodd bynnag, tra bod nifer ohonynt yn cynnwys nifer sylweddol o wahanol SDdGA, neu'n rhan o SDdGA llawer mwy, ni fu'n bosibl dod i unrhyw gasgliadau yn ffrâm amser fer yr astudiaeth ar gyflwr y rhan o'r SDdGA sydd ar dir comin.

Ceir yr arwynebedd mwyaf o dir comin yng Nghymru yn etholaeth Aberhonddu a Maesyfed, gyda mwy na 63,500 ha. Ym Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Dwyrain Caerfyrddin a Dinefwr a Cheredigion ceir rhwng 12,000 a 15,000 ha. Yn Sir Drefaldwyn, Gwyr, Gorllewin Clwyd, De Clwyd, Conwy a Phreseli Sir Benfro mae rhwng 5,000 a 10,000 ha. Nid yw tir comin i'w gael yn yr etholaethau 'gwledig' yn unig – mae arwynebedd sylweddol o dir comin yn llawer o gymoedd de Cymru megis Torfaen a Chaerffili, a hefyd yn Wrecsam.

## Tir Comin astudiaethau achos yng Nghymru

Gan nad oeddem yn gallu cynhyrchu gwybodaeth am gyflwr tir comin SDdGA yng Nghymru, teimlwyd y byddai'n ddefnyddiol sicrhau rhywfaint o wybodaeth ansoddol drwy roi nifer o astudiaethau achos ar waith. Dewiswyd chwe thir comin ar gyfer asesiadau astudiaethau achos yn haf 2005 i esbonio materion ehangach yn ymwneud â rheolaeth neu gyflwr ac maent wedi eu gwasgaru'n berthynol ledled Cymru (gweler y tabl isod). Mae pob un wedi ei ddynodi'n SDdGA heblaw Uwchgwyrfai.

Enw	Sir	Rhif TC	Arwynebedd (ha)	% o'r comin a ddynodwyd yn SDdGA	Prif ddiddordeb o ran cadwraeth	Maint y sampl (ha)
Mynydd Llangyndeyrn	Sir Gaerfyrddin	CL20	85	100	Cors	85
Twyni'r Hen Gastell	Bro Morgannwg	CL32	422 <sup>1</sup>	25 <sup>1</sup>	Glaswelltir calchog, rhostir llaith	73
Abergwesyn (rhan)	Sir Faesyfed	CL116	212	100	Gorgors	<100
Llandeilo, Rhiwlen, Bryn Llanbedr (rhan)	Sir Frycheiniog	CL11	2780	51.75	Rhostir gwlyb, pelenllys gronynnog	<100
Comin Uwchgwyrfai (rhan)	Gwynedd	CL16	1012	100	Rhostir sych	<100
Penrhosfeilw	Ynys Môn	CL59	91	100	Rhostir sych, rhostir arforol	91

<sup>1</sup> Mae'r SDdGA yn rhan o gomin mwy Ogrwr a Thwyni'r Hen Gastell

## Materion allweddol sy'n deillio o diroedd comin yr astudiaethau achos

O'r chwe safle a arolygwyd dim ond un, Uwchgwyrfai, oedd yn ymddangos fel pe bai'n cynnwys cynefin mewn cyflwr ffafriol o safbwynt cadwraeth natur. Fodd bynnag, hyd yn oed ar y safle hwn roedd y cyflwr drwyddo draw yn amrywiol a phe bai pori yn parhau ar y lefel isel presennol, mae'n bosibl y bydd prysgwydd yn ymledu. Mae rheolaeth pori yn fater sy'n codi ei ben yn barhaol yn yr astudiaeth, ac mae'r pori un ai'n annigonol ar sawl comin (Llangyndeyrn, Twyni'r Hen Gastell a Phenrhosfeilw) neu mae gorbori'n digwydd – ar hyn o bryd neu'n hanesyddol – ac nid oes arwyddion eu bod yn gwella (Abergwesyn a Bryniau Llanbedr).

Adnabyddir sawl rheswm dros lefelau pori anaddas:

- **Ffensio** – nid yw tiroedd comin sy'n cael eu rhannu gan ffyrdd yn derbyn digon o bori neu dim pori o gwbl
- **Prinder porwyr** – ar ambell i dir comin nid oes ond un neu ddau borwr gweithredol erbyn hyn sy'n credu ei bod yn economaidd gosod da byw ar y comin
- **Gwrthdrawiadau buddiannau** – gall hyn ddigwydd rhwng y porwyr eu hunain (ynglŷn â'r nifer o dda byw neu reolaeth) a rhwng cominwyr a pherchnogion (er enghraifft y ynglŷn â rheolaeth anifeiliaid hela yn erbyn pori)
- **Llosgi** – yn arf bwysig ond angen ei gynllunio a'i reoli'n ofalus. Mae'n ymddangos bod mannau'n cael eu llosgi o leiaf yn rhannol yn ddamweiniol neu oherwydd fandaliaeth gydag ychydig o reolaeth resymegol
- **Bugeilio** – mae llawer o diroedd comin yn fawr ac yn ffinio gydag ardaloedd agored eraill felly mae angen rheoli'r pori i sicrhau nad oes gormod/dim digon o bori lleol yn digwydd. Mae'r tueddiad tuag at lai o fugeilio oherwydd cyfyngiadau amser a llafur, gydag ychydig o reolaeth o ddydd i ddydd, yn fater o bryder.
- **Anhawster mewn sicrhau cytundebau rheolaeth** – mae sicrhau cytundeb rhwng pob hawl-ddaliwr wedi bod yn anodd, os nad yn amhosibl, ac mae gwrthdrawiadau buddiannau wedi golygu nad yw llawer o gominwyr wedi ymuno â chytundebau amaeth-amgylcheddol neu gytundebau cadwraeth eraill gyda CCGC ar safleoedd dynodedig (a adnabyddir fel cytundebau Adran 15).

Gobeithir y bydd y ddeddfwriaeth newydd yn fodd o ddarparu fframwaith i helpu i ddatrys rhai o'r materion uchod, ond bydd llawer yn ddibynnol ar y cymhellion i gominwyr ffurfio Cymdeithasau Tiroedd Comin Statudol ac ymuno â chytundebau rheolaeth, un ai gyda CCGC neu o dan gynllun amaeth-amgylcheddol.

## **Materion yn ymwneud â gweithredu'r ddeddfwriaeth newydd yng Nghymru**

I ddarparu persbectif ehangach i'r astudiaeth hon, cynhaliwyd nifer fechan o gyfweiliadau anffurfiol ar y ffôn gyda chynrychiolwyr cominwyr o diroedd comin yr astudiaethau achos ac ychydig o safleoedd eraill<sup>14</sup>. Er nad bwriad y pŵl hwn yw bod yn arolwg cynrychioladol o gominwyr ledled Cymru, credwn fod barn yr unigolion hyn yn amlygu rhai o'r materion a wynebir gan gominwyr wrth reoli'r tir y mae ganddynt hawliau arno.

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<sup>14</sup> Cynhaliwyd pymtheg cyfweiliad ynghyd â nifer o drafodaethau mwy anffurfiol gyda'r sawl nad oeddynt yn dymuno cymryd rhan uniongyrchol yn yr arolwg.

- Er bod llawer o'r sawl gafodd gyfweiliad yn dal swydd o fewn eu cymdeithas bori megis cadeirydd neu ysgrifennydd, roedd ansicrwydd ynglŷn â'r nifer o gominwyr a'r nifer a'r math o hawl a gofrestrir ar gyfer y tir comin hwnnw.
- Nid yw cominwyr yn derbyn gwybodaeth reolaidd ynglŷn â rheolaeth eu tir comin o un ffynhonnell ac yn aml roeddent yn teimlo nad oedd ganddynt ddigon o wybodaeth am y materion sy'n effeithio arnynt. Roedd llawer o'r tiroedd comin yn yr arolwg yn SDdGA ac nid yw'n syndod felly mai'r CCGC a enwyd fel y ffynhonnell fwyaf rheolaidd a dibynadwy o wybodaeth. Enwyd perchnogion y tir, Ffederasiwn Cominwyr Cymru a chylchgrawn y Cynulliad, *Gwlad*, hefyd fel ffynonellau o wybodaeth.
- Nid oedd y rhan fwyaf wedi ystyried cynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol, oherwydd eu bod yn credu bod gormod o rwystrau iddynt ymuno. Fodd bynnag roedd amryw yn ystyried y posibilrwydd o ymuno â'r cynlluniau hyn pe bai asiantaethau allanol fel CCGC neu'r Parc Cenedlaethol yn gallu helpu drwy hwyluso'r gwaith gweinyddu.
- O'r sawl a oedd wedi ymuno â chynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol (AAS a Thir Cymen) roedd gan y rhan fwyaf farn bositif, er bod siom ynglŷn â'r diffyg cyswllt rhwng y llywodraeth/asiantaethau o ran bod yn gymorth iddynt ymuno â chynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol newydd pan ddaw y rhai presennol i ben.
- Roedd barn cominwyr am gyflwr amgylcheddol y tir comin yn amrywio, ond roedd yn fwy tebygol o gyd-fynd gyda barn cadwraethwyr mewn achosion lle nad oedd digon o bori. Roedd pryderon megis y defnydd o dir comin ar gyfer adloniant (yn enwedig cerbydau 4 x 4 a'r arfer o yrru beiciau modur oddi ar y ffyrdd) yn cael eu hystyried yn brif fygythiadau amgylcheddol, yn ogystal â fandaliaeth o ganlyniad i losgi di-reolaeth.
- Er bod y rhan fwyaf o gominwyr yn ymwybodol bod deddfwriaeth yn debygol o gael ei fabwysiadu a fyddai'n effeithio arnynt, nid oedd gan y rhan fwyaf ohonynt fawr o syniad ynglŷn â chynnwys y Mesur a *sut* y byddai'n effeithio arnynt. Pan amlinellwyd cynnwys y Mesur iddynt roedd eu safbwyntiau'n amrywio'n fawr ynglŷn â'u hawydd i fynd i'r afael â phwerau statudol i reoli eu gweithrediadau. Y prif bryder oedd a fyddai arian digonol ar gyfer cytundebau rheolaeth amaeth-amgylcheddol neu gytundebau rheolaeth eraill i gyfiawnhau'r gwaith a'r gweinyddu ychwanegol y byddai'n rhaid iddynt ymgymryd â hwy.

## Casgliadau ac argymhellion

Mae'r data a gasglwyd yn ystod yr astudiaeth fer hon o bedwar mis (Mehefin-Medi 2005) yn rhoi inni gipolwg ar natur gymhleth tir comin a'i reolaeth. Y neges sylfaenol yw nad oes ffynhonnell

ganolog ddibynadwy o wybodaeth ynglŷn â chyflwr tir comin Cymru a'i reolaeth, law yn llaw â'r anhawster mewn dod o hyd i ganlyniadau cadarn o'r ffynonellau o ddata sydd yn bodoli, o fewn amser byr. Pe bai mwy o amser ac adnoddau ar gael efallai y bydd yn bosibl defnyddio ystod ehangach o wybodaeth yn cynnwys deunydd arolwg ffotograffig o'r awyr.

Mae asesiadau'r astudiaethau achos a chrynhoad y data yn cefnogi'r farn nad yw'r mwyafrif o diroedd comin sydd â dynodiadau cadwraeth natur yn cael eu rheoli'n gynladwy. Mae ein hastudiaethau achos yn awgrymu y bydd sicrhau lefelau pori priodol yn gydran allweddol wrth geisio sicrhau amcanion cadwraeth ar dir comin. Mae'n bwysig nodi y bydd angen dull o weithredu sy'n benodol i'r tir comin unigol i fynd i'r afael â materion penodol – boed y rhain yn fwy neu lai o bori, neu newid o bori gyda defaid yn unig i batrymau pori mwy cymysg yn cynnwys pori gyda gwartheg/merlod. Golyga newidiadau ehangach mewn cefnogaeth amaethyddol ei bod yn hanfodol bod taliadau amaeth-amgylcheddol yn digwydd ar lefel ddigonol i sicrhau bod modd ymgyrraedd â'r rheolaeth bori angenrheidiol, yn enwedig mewn achosion lle nad oes digon o bori.

Cred RSPB Cymru bod gan y ddeddfwriaeth arfaethedig botensial i alluogi cominwyr i sicrhau gwell rheolaeth o dir comin; fodd bynnag, i sicrhau llwyddiant o ran gweithredu'r ddeddfwriaeth bydd angen sicrhau bod Cymdeithasau Cominwyr yn derbyn adnoddau sylweddol, cefnogaeth a chyngor.

- Dylai'r ddeddfwriaeth newydd helpu i alluogi cominwyr i ddatrys problemau rheolaeth pan fydd Awdurdodau Cofrestru Tir Comin wedi cwblhau'r gwaith o ddiweddarau'r cofrestrau. Bydd angen adnoddau sylweddol i gwblhau'r gwaith hwn o fewn cyfnod rhesymol o amser, yn enwedig yn y siroedd hynny lle mae arwynebedd mawr o dir comin
- Dylid sefydlu ffynhonnell o wybodaeth awdurdodol i gyflenwi gwybodaeth ac i gynghori cominwyr am y ddeddfwriaeth newydd, materion yn ymwneud â rheolaeth a rhannu ymarfer da wrth sefydlu cymdeithasau newydd
- Bydd angen dosrannu adnoddau ychwanegol i sicrhau bod gwybodaeth a chyngor ymarferol ar reolaeth cadwraeth ar gael i bob tir comin. Yn anochel, bydd hyn yn golygu ymweliadau â'r safle gan swyddogion medrus
- Mae angen amlwg i'r Cynulliad a'i asiantaethau gweithredu fabwysiadu rôl ymarferol mewn cynorthwyo cominwyr i ffurfio Cymdeithasau Tir Comin Statudol er mwyn penderfynu ar gytundebau rheolaeth. Mae angen

cyfarwyddyd clir i'r perwyl hwn yn llythyrau cyfrifoldebau Awdurdodau Lleol, CCGC a Pharciau Cenedlaethol yng Nghymru.

- Bydd angen adnoddau ychwanegol mewn cytundebau rheolaeth amaeth-amgylcheddol ac Adran 15 i ddarparu ysgogiad digonol i gominwyr ffurfio cymdeithasau statudol newydd. Mae'n rhaid i hyn fod yn rhan o weledigaeth y Cynllun Datblygu Gwledig newydd i Gymru, ynghyd â gosod targedau a llinellau amser ar gyfer sicrhau bod tiroedd comin yn cael eu cynnwys mewn cytundebau rheolaeth
- Dylid datblygu systemau monitro sy'n galluogi asesiad o ganlyniadau amgylcheddol y ddeddfwriaeth newydd.

# A Common Land Case Study Project

## Introduction

Draft legislation to reform the management of Common land in England & is currently being considered. Given that more than 8% of Wales is common land and of this 45% is designated as SSSI, there is a clear need for the legislation to resolve management issues in Wales. In order to obtain Welsh political support and momentum for the inclusion of conservation issues in this Bill, qualitative data from Wales is required.

This report focuses on six case study commons, which each demonstrate some of the conservation issues concerning the management of common land, their conservation importance and the urgent need for changes to common land legislation. Other issues such as recreational use, mining or the possible siting of wind turbines are not considered in this report.

## Methods

Six commons were chosen across Wales following discussions with CCW regional staff, to illustrate issues that are considered to be shared across many areas of common land in Wales. The six chosen were:

Name	County	CL number	OS map	Grid Ref	Size of sample (ha)
Mynydd Llangydeyrn	Carmarthenshire	CL20	159	SN 485133	85
Old Castle Down	Vale of Glamorgan	CL32	170	SS 905758	73
Abergwesyn (part)	Brecknockshire	CL116	147	SN 880580	<100
Llandeilo, Rhulen, Llanbedr Hill (part)	Radnorshire	CL11	148	SO 160470	<100
Comin Uwchgwyrfai,	Gwynedd	CL16	115	SH 527554	<100
Penrhosfeilw	Ynys Mon	CL59	114	SH 215800	91

Each common was visited by Mick Green, contractor, with CCW staff (except Penrhosfeilw which was surveyed by CCW staff as part of its SAC monitoring programme). The main conservation interest of each site was confirmed by reference to the notified features of the SSSI and the main attributes of the habitat of interest identified by reference to JNCC guidance on Common

Standards Monitoring. A sample area representing the main conservation interest was then chosen and a grid of monitoring points was examined to identify presence or absence of the identified attributes. This allowed for a detailed assessment of the condition of the sample area. Where the habitat is in a healthy state the habitat is recorded as in favourable condition, where this is not the case, or where SSSI are not meeting the conservation objectives for that habitat, this was recorded as unfavourable condition.

In addition, the entire common, or a large sample of the common, was walked and the overall condition of the habitat assessed. A map of the main vegetation types was also produced. From these results and from further background information, the main issues affecting the conservation management of the commons were identified.

## **Results**

Full results are given for each common on the following pages.

## **Abergwesyn**

Part of Common 116. Total area 212 ha. Grid Ref SO880580. County: Powys. Height 530 – 570m.

This common, which goes by various names, is one of a number of blocks of common in open hill country on the edge of the Elan estate; it is part of the much larger block of open ground known as the Elenydd. Part of the common is in the catchment for the Elan valley reservoirs and therefore subject to a legal right of access under the City of Birmingham Act 1899, which may also control land use to some extent. The exact boundaries of both the Elan estate and the common are unclear.

As part of the wider open area, this common is grazed by free-ranging sheep, and there are no controls around the common boundary. There are 4 pasture rights for sheep registered according to the Common Land Survey 1993, but as there are no boundary controls it is unclear as to how these are exercised.

The area is subject to occasional burning, usually set by graziers over a wider area to control purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and was last thought to have been burnt around 2000.

The area is within the Elenydd SSSI, SAC and SPA. The designations consider the area to be one of the most important areas of hill land in Wales for nature conservation for upland breeding birds such as golden plover and dunlin, upland vegetation and woodlands. The acid grasslands tend to have a high representation of purple moor grass and there are some areas of dwarf shrub.

### **Conservation Interest**

As well as its interest as part of the larger Elenydd site, the conservation interest on the common was identified as areas of blanket bog. This is an Annex 1 habitat in the Habitats Directive and is of importance for breeding, and particularly feeding, habitat for golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and dunlin (*Calidris alpina*).

Using definitions from CCW monitoring standards, blanket bog in favourable condition is defined as having at least 6 of the following species: bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), sundew (*Drosera spp*), heaths (*Erica spp*), crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), bog cotton (*Eriophorum spp*), bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), deergrass (*Tricophorum cespitosum*), bilberry (*Vaccinium spp*) and bog moss (*Sphagnum spp*), with at least 10 %

bog moss (*Sphagnum spp*) present (to indicate wetness of area) and no patches of finer grasses (such as mat grass *Nardus stricta*) larger than 20cm diameter present.

A grid was walked across the sample habitat plot and points classified as to whether they met the above criteria every 10m, a total of 80 points were classified. The bog was found to be very degraded, with none of the points meeting the above criteria. Of the above species, only 6 were present. Heather was present in 27 points, bilberry in 35, heaths in 10, bog moss in 15, bog cotton in 1 and crowberry in 1. The most found at one point was 3 species. Around the edge of the core of the bog it became more dominated by purple moor grass, and bilberry was often the only indicator species present.

This means that the blanket bog on the sample plot was in an unfavourable condition. The whole area had been classified as wet modified bog in the common land survey and Phase 1 survey and the areas of higher interest were not differentiated, possibly indicating how degraded it is. Much of the heath species appeared low-growing and suppressed, probably as a result of burning followed by a relatively high level of grazing.

### **Site level assessment**

The whole site is dominated by purple moor grass. Where heath species are present they are generally suppressed - there were no areas of dominant heath found. There are also areas of eroding and drying peat hags, which may be indicative of past or present grazing levels. The blanket bog on the common is in an unfavourable condition, and the dominance of fairly rank moor grass means the area is generally unsuitable for breeding golden plover and dunlin.

### **Issues**

The site shows signs of past management with many years of heavy grazing and burning. This has led to the dominance of purple moor grass and the resultant lack of diversity in the vegetation. Areas of thick purple moor grass are not suitable habitat for breeding waders such as golden plover. The common is subject to the wider management of the whole area and cannot be managed as a separate block as it is not suitable for fencing; there are complications with the regulations regarding the Elan estate (The City of Birmingham Act) and boundaries are ill-defined.

In order to bring this site into a better condition in conservation terms burning should be stopped as this is leading to suppression of heath species. Grazing would need to be controlled and stock

removed in early autumn to allow heath species to increase. At present, grazing is year-round with supplementary feeding in some areas (although none obvious on this site). As the area has suffered over many years from the current management regime, physical management may be required to break up dominant purple moor grass stands, especially where they have formed dense tussocks.

Any management of this common would require agreement between surrounding land owners, common rights holders and the Elan Estate, as well as CCW, to ensure SSSI, SAC and SPA designations are not compromised. It would have to be part of wider management plan for the area as a whole, which illustrates the difficulty in managing isolated commons in larger blocks of land where boundaries are ill-defined.

## **Sources**

CCW staff.

1993 Common Land Survey (Dept of Geography, UW Aberystwyth)

SSSI, SAC and SPA Citations.

## **Llanbedr Hill**

Part of Common Land 11. Total Area 2780 ha. Grid Ref SS162476 County: Powys.

Altitude: 320-410m

Llanbedr Hill is part of Common Land 11 – Llandeilo Hill, Llanbedr Hill and Red Hills Common. It is the largest common in Radnor (Powys), and comprises extensive areas of heather with bracken on the slopes, rocky outcrops and scrub. Small pools are also a feature of the site.

The common has changed hands in recent years. The current owners have attempted to restore heather by burning to improve grouse shooting prospects. Initially, this caused conflict with the graziers' rights, as stocking levels were too high in many areas to allow proper regeneration of heather, following burns. The heather management was more successful when larger areas were burnt and the graziers entered into an Environmentally Sensitive Area agreement, which led to a general reduction in grazing pressure. There are around 120 rights registered across the common with pasture rights for sheep, cattle and ponies. Sheep appear to be the main animal present across the common. Stocking levels still appear high on some parts of the common, particularly in the Llanbedr Hill sample area. There are also rights to cut Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) for stock bedding and these are exercised in some areas leading to areas of Bracken with open grass underneath.

Much of the site is an SSSI for the upland heath and grassland habitats and associated bird communities. There is also the nationally rare pillwort (*Pilularia globularia*) found in some of the pools on the site.

Llanbedr Hill is to the east of a larger block of common land. It is a hill rising to 410m with an area of wet heath and a pool on the top, merging into drier acid grassland. There are large areas of bracken and an area of gorse *Ulex europeaus* scrub along with a small area of lower boggy land. At the time of survey it was being grazed by a large number of sheep and some horses.

### **Conservation Interest:**

The main conservation interest in the sample area on Llanbedr Hill was identified as wet heath. This is a Habitats Directive Annexe 1 habitat and is unusual here; as it is a rare habitat in the drier east of the county, and on this site, which is intermediate in elevation between upland and lowland. The habitat has also supported breeding lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) in the past,

although their current status is uncertain. This species may have bred on the heath (though in some years they are thought to have bred in areas of adjacent bracken that had been cut for bedding - and therefore removed leaving open habitat the previous autumn), and relied on the wet heath for feeding grounds, especially for the chicks. Lapwings have declined seriously in Wales and are on the 'Red' list of seriously declining species (Thorpe and Young 2003) and are the subject of a Biodiversity Action Plan. The common probably also supports a good density of skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), another declining species, but which is locally common in Wales.

The heath appeared to have been burnt in the past, and subject to heavy grazing, but currently appears to be recovering with growth of young heather. A suitable aim for this site would be to achieve a balance between good growth of wet heath species and an open and low sward to attract lapwings.

Wet Heath was defined as containing 25 – 75% of heath species (*Ericoids*) cover, with Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) present. At least one species indicating wetness such as carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*), sundew (*Drosera* spp.) or bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp) must be present. Good condition was indicated by fewer than 10 plants of heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) in each plot and the absence of dense patches of mat grass (*Nardus stricta*). To accommodate the requirements of lapwings, good condition is also assessed as having a vegetation height of between 5 and 20cm. If the monitoring points met the above criteria they were classed as a 'Pass', if not, a 'Fail'

Two areas were systematically monitored on a regular grid, recording the vegetation at 50cm diameter points at 20m intervals. The two grids were walked to give a total of 100 sample points. 73 were classed as wet heath habitat, with the remaining points acid grassland, bracken or unclassified habitat. Of the wet heath points 54 passed, indicating habitat in good condition and 19 failed. Of these, eight failed due to the lack of wetland indicator species, four due to too much heath rush and seven due to too much mat grass. The JNCC guidance recommends that when a feature is reported as favourable, it should be possible to state with a high degree of confidence that each target is met over a least 90% of the feature. In which case, given only 54 of 73 sample points passed for all attributes, the wet heath feature in the sample area would be considered unfavourable, as only 74% of the sample points passed.

Overall, the central area of the heath was in good condition, but the edges appeared to be moving towards grassland or were being encroached by bracken. The failures (due to a lack of wetland

species, too much grass and the number of points that were classed as grassland) indicate that the site may be drying out and moving towards grassland, possibly due to the high grazing levels. Of the wetland species looked for, only carnation sedge was found – there was no sign of sundew or bog moss (which would indicate a wetter habitat), and there was little visually wet ground.

Given the encroachment of bracken and mat grass, and the indications of drying out and the number of sample points failing the condition assessment, the overall condition of this feature is considered to be unfavourable.

**Site level assessment:**

There are large areas of bracken on the Llanbedr Hill, which may be encroaching on the edges of the heath, and areas of gorse scrub currently held in check by heavy grazing pressure. On the wider common, generally there is widespread bracken growth and the heather is in varying condition. Grazing is heavy in parts of the site and there is damaging recreational pressures by motorcycles in some areas. The encroachment of bracken, the grazing pressure and the uncertain condition of the heather areas means that the common as a whole is considered to be in an unfavourable condition.

**Issues:**

Control of grazing is the main issue in the sample area, and indeed, across parts of the wider common. It is important to maintain suitable heather management in the longer term, control encroaching bracken and reduce damage and disturbance by recreational vehicles.

Grazing levels on the Llanbedr Hill wet heath appear high at present, but this may be appropriate for the conflicting needs of managing for heath and lapwing. Managing grazing at finely tuned levels is difficult on commons given the conflicting needs of rights holders, owners and conservation interests, even though there are management agreements currently in place here, through the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme. In addition, the differing needs of the different compartments of the common, with no fencing between them, means that grazing management would require shepherding which is not economic at present.

Ideal management for this part of the site would be carefully controlled grazing with a mixture of cattle, sheep and horses. Monitoring would be required and grazing adjusted according to results.

Shepherding of animals to avoid localised overgrazing would help. Bracken control would open up new areas for lapwings to nest and would relieve grazing pressure on the heath habitat.

On the wider common, bracken control, heather management and shepherding of mixed grazing would improve the overall conservation interest of the site.

Sources:

CCW and RSPB staff.

1990 Common Land Survey (Dept of Geography, UW Aberystwyth)

SSSI Citation.

Thorpe RI and Young A (2003) *The population status of birds in Wales: an analysis of conservation concern:2002-2007* RSPB Cymru Cardiff

## **Mynydd Llangydeyrn**

Common Land 20. Size: 85ha. Grid Ref: SN485133. County: Carmarthenshire. Altitude 183-262m.

Mynydd Llangydeyrn is an area of unimproved grassland, rocky limestone outcrops, small areas of bog and *Molinia* grassland on peat basins. The site is owned by a commoners association and is currently more or less ungrazed. It is designated as a SSSI and the citation states it “is notable as one of the larger upland semi-natural areas left in south-west Wales”.

### **Main conservation interest**

The main interest was identified as two areas of bog, one in the SW corner and one larger basin in the NE of the common. The smaller area was mapped as B5 marshy grassland in the Common Land Survey of 1988, and the larger area, contained within a rocky basin and locally important, was identified as E15 Basin Mire. They could probably both now be described as degraded bogs. The area in the SW corner was identified as being of highest conservation interest, with areas of heath vegetation, and therefore habitat in this area was monitored for condition.

‘Good’ condition of basin mire is defined as containing at least three of: deergrass (*Tricophorum cespitosum*), heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), crossleaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and bog cotton (*Eriophorum spp*) within a 50cm radius at each point; bog moss (*Sphagnum spp*) visible without disturbing the surface of the sward; maximum cover of *Molinia* of 50%, and maximum vegetation height of less than 25cm.

The area was monitored systematically on a grid, with the condition assessed at 10m intervals. In all, 63 points were assessed, with only 6 (9.5%) meeting the criteria for ‘good’ condition. As the bog in this area was considered to be most likely to meet the criteria for good condition, it would be reasonable to assume that all of the bog habitat on the site is in a generally poor state and would be considered unfavourable. The ‘good’ points were mainly in one small area in the centre of the bog, with some patches on the SE edge. Towards the south of the area *Molinia* became very rank with vegetation height over 1m. *Salix* scrub is encroaching at various points.

The bog was monitored after a long dry spell, but even taking this into consideration it was very dry, with no standing water present. The larger basin was wetter.

Overall, the basin mire feature, identified as the main conservation interest, was in an unfavourable condition.

### **Site level assessment**

A walk through 'Phase 1' survey showed large areas of unimproved grassland with encroaching bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The area of bracken had increased considerably since the Common Land Survey of 1988. The areas of *Molinia* grassland over deeper peat pockets were mainly quite rank, although there were one or two small pockets that may be described as wet heath.

Furthermore, the areas of rocky outcrop also contained some heath vegetation. Overall, given the encroachment of bracken and the rank nature of the purple moor grass, the common is in an unfavourable condition.

There is little grazing on site, although small areas along the path across the centre are well-grazed by rabbits, and two ponies were present at the time of survey. There is no sign of any other grazing although there is evidence of recent burning in several parts of the site.

### **Issues**

The lack of grazing is probably the main issue leading to change in vegetation on the site. This was also noted by the Common Land Survey in 1988, which stated that, "The common was purchased in 1985 by the commoners. They hope to fence it in order to graze it. Currently grazing is a problem because of the unfenced main road". The site is still unfenced. The lack of grazing is probably causing the spread of bracken (although this can also be a problem on grazed sites), and the rank nature of much of the *Molinia*. Burning may also lead to impoverishment of the ground, especially where soils are thin, and could lead to the loss of some species. It is not known why the bog is drying out, this may be partly due to the increasing rankness of the vegetation and the spread of *Salix*, but it may also be due to other unknown local factors.

Although the lack of grazing may be the main issue leading to the poor condition of the bog area, ungrazed land is rare in Wales, and therefore there is some interest in the natural progression of the site.

Restoring light cattle grazing, along with some bracken control, would help the overall condition of the site. Management of water table in the smaller bog and some scrub control may be required to bring this area back into favourable condition.

## **Sources**

CCW staff

1988 Common Land Survey (Dept of Geography, UW Aberystwyth)

SSSI Citation

## **Old Castle Down**

Common Land 32. Area: 422 ha. Grid Ref: SS890760. County: Glamorgan. Altitude: 0 – 100m

Old Castle Down is part of the larger Ogmore and Old Castle Down common, totalling 422 ha and comprising three distinct areas:

- 1) a coastal strip around Ogmore by Sea considered to be overgrazed
- 2) Ogmore Down which is a mosaic of calcareous grassland, dry heath with acidic grassland, dense scrub and bracken
- 3) a golf course.

The unmanaged areas are generally considered to be undergrazed, with spread of scrub and bracken. Due to the large size of the common this study concentrated on Old Castle Down, which comprises 80 ha of the eastern section of the common, and is designated as a SSSI (central Grid Ref. SS805758). It is a site of conservation importance for its range of limestone heath and calcareous grassland vegetation. It is of high importance for soft-leaved sedge (*Carex montana*). There are areas of apparently increasing gorse, tree scrub and bracken intruding into the areas of interest. Invertebrate interest is known to be high, with high brown (*Argynnis adippe*), dark green (*Argynnis aglaja*) and pearl bordered fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*) butterflies recorded. There is some cutting of vegetation and some burning. The common is crossed by a busy road (the B4265).

## **Main Conservation Interest**

The main conservation interest is the mosaic of limestone damp heath and open, species-rich calcareous grassland. This is located along the slopes either side of the B4265.

Habitats were defined as follows: Calcareous damp heath- contains purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*), salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*) or rock rose (*Helianthemum chamaecistus*), and at least one heather, plus Lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and/or betony (*Stachys officinalis*). Open, species-rich calcareous grassland- contains at least 2 of eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) or squinancywort (*Asperula cyanchica*). calcareous grassland- has at least 25% cover of sedges and grasses and contains rock rose.

Sample points were defined as 'pass' if they met the above criteria and had gorse *Ulex* spp. less than 30cm high, less than 5 fronds of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and no saplings. Sample points

were classed as a 'fail' if they did not meet the above criteria or had gorse above 30cm, and/or more than 5 fronds of bracken and/or saplings present.

Two monitoring areas were chosen, one on each side of the B4265. Two 50 x 50m plots were used, with monitoring points being assessed systematically every five metres in a grid across the plot. In the end, there was insufficient habitat to complete either plot, with 50 monitoring points in plot A (SS899792) and 60 in plot B (SS896761).

In Plot A, 12 points were classed as calcareous grassland; seven were classed as 'pass' and five failed due to bracken intrusion. 13 points were classed as open, species-rich calcareous grassland with seven classed as 'pass', six failing due to bracken intrusion and one due to gorse height. Six points were classed as damp heath with only one 'pass' – the rest failed due to thick gorse growth. The rest of the points were classed as non-target habitats – mainly areas of thick, impenetrable gorse. Overall, the sample plot was in an unfavourable condition.

In Plot B, 26 points were classed as open species-rich calcareous grassland, with 22 classed as 'pass' and four failing due to bracken intrusion. A total of 30 points were classed as damp heath with only five recorded as a 'pass'; 22 failed due to gorse height and dominance and 3 failed due to bracken intrusion. The remaining points were non-target habitats such as gorse or rank *Molinia*. Overall, this sample plot was also in an unfavourable condition.

Overall, out of 110 points sampled 42 were classed as 'pass' or in good condition (38%), with a higher proportion of habitat in good condition on site B within the open grassland. The damp heath was in poor condition in both sites. The area of grassland in good condition was in the central area of Plot B and is under threat from encroaching bracken and gorse from surrounding areas. The sample areas are therefore in an unfavourable condition, based on JNCC guidelines.

### **Site level assessment**

A walk through the surrounding habitats, and comparison with earlier surveys, showed that the area of bracken and dominant gorse was spreading. Once the gorse forms dense stands no grazing animals enter the clumps, allowing growth of trees. There were several clumps of gorse with dense sapling growth in the centre, with patches tending towards woodland (mainly Ash dominated). This is a relatively new change, although it is rapidly altering the state of the common. The Common Land Survey of 1990 noted that grazing pressure on the site was 'high',

and a survey of changes between 1980 and 1995 showed little change on the areas of calcareous grassland, with an increase in gorse in the heath areas leading to small loss of habitat. No mention is made of bracken spread.

Around 35 commoners are thought to have grazing rights, but currently only one or two exercise these. The unfenced B road through the centre is increasingly busy and is a danger to straying animals. Any current grazing appears to be sheep, although there is evidence that it included cattle and horses in the past.

Burning still takes place, although it is uncertain whether this is deliberate or not. There is a fire break cut across the edge of the upper plateau of the common which has controlled the bracken in this area, but cut vegetation is not removed and it appears the mulch this creates is leading to declining diversity of species (although there is a good growth of viola, an important foodplant for fritillaries, family Nyphalidae).

Dartford warblers (*Sylvia undata*) breed on the site, and Stonechats (*Saxicola torquata*) were noted during the current survey.

The encroachment of bracken and scrub, and loss of open grassland, along with a lack of management, means that the site is considered to be in an unfavourable condition.

## **Issues**

The main issue, leading to a serious decline in conservation interest in the open mosaics of heath and grassland, is lack of grazing. The main reasons for this are unclear. The lack of fencing along the increasingly busy B road is undoubtedly an issue. Stock cannot be grazed safely in this area unless fencing is provided. The decline in active graziers amongst the commoners is also a factor – how much this is due to fencing problems, retirements and / or the general economic conditions in the industry is unclear. CAP reform also has implications that are unclear, including the definition of ‘good agricultural & environmental condition’ for a site such as this.

If grazing and other management is not introduced in the near future this site is likely to lose its main conservation interest and will progress to a woodland habitat.

To restore the conservation interest grazing should be introduced, ideally by ponies and cattle. This would require fencing of the road for safety of drivers and stock. Initially, bracken and scrub control would be required to open up areas for grazing animals. Areas of gorse should be retained for Dartford warblers and other species, and should be kept under control in future if grazing levels are correct.

## **Sources**

Survey, July 2005

CCW Staff

Common Land Survey 1990 (Dept of Geography, UW Aberystwyth)

*Vegetation Changes at Old Castle Down SSSI*; A Peterken; CCW Report 1996

SSSI Citation

## **Penrhosfeilw**

Common no. 59. Total Area: 91 ha. Grid Ref: SH 217800. County: Gwynedd. Altitude 0-30m.

Penrhosfeilw common is located on the coast of Holy Island, approximately 4 km west of Holyhead. The common falls within the Glannau Ynys Gybi/ Holy Island Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), and the Glannau Ynys Gybi/ Holy Island Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

From the tops of the sea cliffs inland, the vegetation runs through a sequence from maritime grassland through to maritime heath to scrub and bracken. There are small areas of wet heath in damper parts of the common. Three SAC habitats are represented on the common:

- vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
- European dry heath
- Northern Atlantic wet heath.

Glannau Ynys Gybi SPA is designated for Chough. Penrhosfeilw common is important for both feeding and breeding for the local Chough population. This species requires short grassland and more open heath to forage for the invertebrates which are their primary food source. The SSSI is designated for vegetated coastal cliffs and cliff-top grassland, maritime heath, lowland dry heath, lowland wet heath, and species including the chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), silver studded blue butterfly (*Plebeius argus*), spathulate fleawort (*Tephroseria integrifolia*) and ciliate strap lichen (*Heterodermia leucomela*), which all occur on the common.

The common is owned by Anglesey County Council and managed by the RSPB under lease. The grazing rights are held by a single commoner. Traditionally, rotational small patch burning has been used in conjunction with grazing to manage the dry heath. This practice is continued by the RSPB.

## **Conservation interest**

The targets for the maritime heath and dry heath at Penrhosfeilw are aimed at ensuring suitable proportions of good quality species-rich, open heath suitable for choughs to forage in. For the maritime grassland the targets are aimed at ensuring that there is a suitable proportion of the grassland which is species-rich, with a short sward height to encourage foraging choughs.

Favourable condition was described as: at least 50% of the dry heath can be attributed to short species-rich dry heath; at least 70% of the maritime heath can be attributed to species-rich maritime heath; at least 70% of the maritime grassland can be attributed to short species-rich maritime grassland and no more than 10 % of the Penrhosfeilw common will be scrub (including *Ulex europeaus*) over 50 cm in height or bracken.

Areas of dry heath and maritime heath which appeared to be less uniform (the best quality areas) were selected for the placement of monitoring plots. The shorter, more species-rich (best quality) areas of the maritime grassland were also selected for monitoring. However, much of the maritime grassland is out of reach for monitoring purposes because of its cliff top location. Stands which were shorter and showed some species diversity were selected for sampling. It was assumed that if the sample target could not be met in the best examples of heathland and grassland habitats at Penrhosfeilw common then the poorer quality heathland and grassland would almost certainly fail.

Several monitoring plots were established on the common. Within the plots recording points were located 20m apart in a grid pattern over areas of dry heath and 10m apart in areas of maritime heath and maritime grassland. Each point was assessed against site-specific definitions of good quality habitat (Lewis, H., 2005).

The results were as follows,-

Habitat	Area	No. of points Assessed	% points which passed
Dry Heath	52.7 ha	160	20%
Maritime Heath	16.6 ha	75	44%
Maritime Grassland	10.6 ha	32	22%

Therefore, the dry heath, maritime heath and maritime grassland within Penrhosfeilw common should be considered to be in unfavourable condition.

## Issues

The main threat to the SAC grassland and heathland habitats at Penrhosfeilw is the lack of grazing which can lead to a decline in the quality of the habitats and to scrub invasion. This is also a threat to the chough population since the short sward required by foraging choughs is maintained by grazing. The RSPB, supported by CCW, would like to reintroduce grazing onto the common. The

commoner, however, is reluctant to put stock on the site. In addition, there is considerable local opposition to the idea of reintroducing grazing stock. This means that the current condition is considered unfavourable, with a probable continuation of this trend in the future.

Under-grazing has meant that the majority of the maritime grassland across the site has become long and dominated by fescue (*Festuca* spp). Some shorter, more species-rich stands of grassland do exist very close to the cliff edge where the soil becomes shallow. Much of the maritime heath and dry heath has become relatively tall, very dense and uniform in structure and, consequently, species poor. However, in more exposed areas of the site the maritime heath is maintained in a more open condition by the wind and salt spray.

The tradition of rotational small patch burning, in conjunction with grazing, is continued by the RSPB. This patch burning helps to maintain a mosaic of different age classes of heath. However, reliance on burning alone is insufficient to maintain the interest of the site since it tends to favour regeneration by western gorse and heather to the exclusion of other species. If extensive stands of mature heath develop rather than a mosaic of different age classes, large areas of heath could be affected if accidental fire occurs.

The introduction of grazing into this section of the site should improve the condition of the habitats. The grassland in particular would benefit from a shorter sward height, which would also benefit feeding choughs.

## **Sources**

CCW staff

1991 Common Land Survey (Dept of Geography, UW Aberystwyth)

A report into the condition of the heathland and maritime grassland within Penrhosfeilw

Common, H. Lewis, 18.08.2005, CCW

## Uwchgwyrfai

Common 16. Total area: 1012 ha. Grid Ref: SH 520 560. County: Gwynedd. Altitude: 200 – 698 m.

Uwchgwyrfai is a very varied common, extending from an area of 'urban' fringe to the remote summit of Mynydd Mawr. It incorporates a variety of habitats, with large areas of heath along with acid grassland, lake, flushes and some mire. There are areas of past industry in the form of slate quarries in and around the site, and some archaeological interest.

The site is in the ownership of the Crown Estate Commissioners and is open to public access by deed, although the amount of access varies across the site. There is a path to the summit of Mynydd Mawr, which, while showing some signs of erosion, appears to receive a low level of use compared with many paths in the Snowdonia area. There is also a way-marked path across the centre of the site, and small-scale car parking and information boards at various points. The site has been subject to grant funding and a project officer was employed to develop use of the area generally, including the common, but there is currently no one in post and future plans are unknown.

The 'urban' fringe nature of the common where it surrounds the villages of Fron Carmel, Moel Tryfan etc. has brought problems of sheep straying into gardens in the past (the roadside verges within parts of the villages are included in the common) but recently cattle grids have been installed, although these are not fully operational. There have also been problems with vandalising of notice boards and burning of cars on and around the site. There has been burning of heather in the past, mainly as a management tool by graziers, but also partly through accident or vandalism. The last known burn was a large area on the west of Mynydd Mawr, thought to have been burnt around 2000.

A total of 236 pasture rights are registered, but recent information is that there are very few currently active graziers. At the time of survey there was no grazing taking place on the common, and no sign of recent grazing on the heath area surveyed. At the time of the Common Land Survey in 1991 grazing was noted as moderate overall, though high on Moel Tryfan.

## Conservation interest

The main conservation interest on the site was identified as heath – mainly large areas of dry heath extending up the slopes of Mynydd Mawr. A 100m square block of this habitat was monitored, including a mosaic of mature heather and recovering burnt areas.

Dry heath is a European 'Annexe 1' habitat, and the following definition, adapted from CCW monitoring standards, was used:

“Dwarf shrub should cover at least 50% of each monitoring point; with at least 2 species of heath species present and with gorse or bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) forming less than 50% cover”.

The monitoring plot was recorded systematically on a regular grid, with monitoring points of 1m diameter in area inspected every 20m. A total of 87 points fell in the recovering burnt area, with 13 falling in the older, unburnt, stand. All 100 monitoring points were found to meet the above criteria indicating that the burnt area is recovering well. Whilst there were at least 2 heath species present in all points, there were found to be 3 in all the burnt area points, but only 2 in 10 of the unburnt points, indicating a lessening of diversity as the heath matures. This habitat is therefore in a favourable condition.

Small areas of gorse (*Ulex* spp.) were present in some areas of the heath, although in small, contained patches. Little scrub was noted, apart from a few individual conifer bushes, and an area near the lake that contained a few rowan saplings.

## Overall site condition

Overall, the heath appeared to be in good condition, which reflected the condition of the site in general. In 1991, Moel Tryfan was noted to have high grazing levels, and was mapped as dry heath. A visit in 2001 noted that stocking levels were still quite high in this area, and vegetation was mainly acid grassland, indicating effects from overgrazing. On this visit, however, there was no evidence of recent grazing, and areas of heath vegetation around the edges of Moel Tryfan were recovering. The recovering vegetation means that the site may be considered to be in recovering or overall favourable condition, but long term trends are very uncertain given the current lack of grazing.

## Issues

The main issue for this site is control of grazing management. It has gone from grazing at a good level (in terms of conservation management) over the remoter parts of the site, with overgrazing around Moel Tryfan, to a situation where there is little or no grazing on the site. Problems of stock control around the fringes of the site are being addressed by installation of cattle grids. Sheep are the main grazing animal of choice as cattle are thought to be more at risk from unfenced mines and quarries. Horses were grazed on the north of the common in the recent past.

Whilst the current lack of grazing is allowing good regeneration of heath species, both in burnt areas and in areas of acid grassland, it may move to being undergrazed in the near future. A complete lack of grazing could see the spread of gorse, and invasion by scrub and invasive conifers from the adjacent forestry plantations. Previously, sheep concentrated on the grassy and urban fringe areas leading to the localised overgrazing and invasion of gardens. Any re-introduction of grazing would need to be accompanied by some shepherding to ensure there is no localised overgrazing. In the event of cattle being used, the mine and quarry areas would need to be fenced, while if horses were used, issues relating to 'pony passports' would need to be resolved on the common.

There is also a concern that, without a burning regime, the heather may become over mature and subject to catastrophic accidental burning. Woody heather will burn hotter and may cause burning of peat and loss of other species within the sward. At present this is not a problem, and the exposed condition of the mountain slopes means that heather over a large part of the mountain is unlikely to grow very dense. However, given the incidences of vandalism around the site, burns are a danger, and some management or construction / cutting of firebreaks would be a good precautionary measure.

Any such management would need a coherent plan and the agreement of all the graziers. Good management of heather also requires sheep to be taken off in the autumn, and therefore requires graziers to have alternative grazing available. It is not known if this is the case on this site. As with other commons, the lack of active graziers is an obstacle to getting stock management right for the site.

## **Sources**

CCW staff

1991 Common Land Survey (Dept of Geography, UW Aberystwyth)

2001 unpublished report to Cymad (local development agency)

## **Common themes and summary of issues**

Grazing management is the common theme throughout the study. Commons were either undergrazed, or have been overgrazed in the past and are not recovering. There appeared to be several reasons for this.

**Fencing:** commons that were bisected by a road were undergrazed or not grazed at all. With increasing traffic on the roads it is not safe to let stock stray across unfenced roads and unless they can be fenced graziers are very unlikely to graze the commons.

**Lack of graziers:** on some commons there appeared to be only one or two active graziers and where this was combined with fencing problems, graziers were at some distance from the common, or restrictions on stock movements caused problems, they were unlikely to exercise their grazing rights. If it becomes difficult or uneconomic to graze the commons undergrazing of the vegetation will result.

**Conflicts of interest:** where there are conflicts of interest between rights holders and land owners, such as conflict between grazing and gamekeeping interests, the conservation interest is often forgotten.

**Burning:** use of burning as a management tool requires careful planning and execution. On some commons burning appears to be at least partly due to accident or vandalism, or else has been exercised in uncontrolled large burns. If maximum conservation benefit is to be gained, and species are not to be lost, burning needs much closer management, and in many cases alternative management should be looked at.

**Shepherding:** as many commons can be quite large, or are integral with larger open areas, grazing management is difficult without active shepherding. This is not economic and most stock are 'ranch'd' across such areas with little or no day-to-day management. This can cause localized over or under grazing, poaching of ground etc.

**Difficulty in obtaining management agreements:** agreements need all rights holders to participate, and where there are a number of inactive holders, or where there are conflicts of interest it is difficult to get agreements.

## ANNEX A

### Data on all commons by constituency

#### Blaenau Gwent

- Overall common land area: 4738ha
- Number of common land units: 10
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 0ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 0
- % of common land that is SSSI: 0
- Area of National Park: 13.5ha
- % of common land that National Park <1%

#### Key features of commons in Blaenau Gwent

Large blocks over 100ha typify the common land in this constituency, with high numbers of sheep and cattle grazing on several commons.

#### Brecon & Radnorshire

- Overall common land area: 63661ha
- Number of common land units: 161
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 25604ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 37%
- % of common land that is SSSI: 40%
- Area of National Park: 34183ha
- % of common land that National Park 54%

#### Key features of commons in Brecon & Radnorshire

There are a large number of commons in this area and although many are under 100ha they often form part of much larger blocks in the Brecon Beacons, Black Mountains and the Radnor Hills. Habitats are primarily upland heath, with grassland, bracken and some woodland. Grazing intensity varies between commons depending on rights structures and management arrangements. Sheep are the primary grazing animal although ponies are also to be found, especially in the Beacons and the Black Mountains. Recreation is also a key usage on several

commons. The Glanusk estate and the Brecon Beacons National Park are major landowners but many commons are privately owned.

## **Bridgend**

- Overall common land area: 2400ha
- Number of common land units: 18
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 158ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 5
- % of common land that is SSSI: 67%

### Key features of commons in Bridgend

Includes such areas as Kenfig, Ogmore Old Castle Down and Cefn Hirgoed.

## **Caerphilly**

- Overall common land area: 3600ha
- Number of common land units: 13
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 43ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 1
- % of common land that is SSSI: 1.19%

### Key features of commons in Caerphilly

Primarily urban fringe commons which are used for recreation and several have problems with dumping of waste. There are grazing rights for sheep cattle and horses registered.

## **Caernarfon**

- Overall common land area: 4417ha
- Number of common land units: 60
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 3821ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 19
- % of common land that is SSSI: 87%
- Area of SAC/SPA 128ha (3 SPA)
- % of common land that is SAC/SPA 3%

- Area of National Park: 2251 ha
- % of common land that National Park 51%

#### Key features of commons in Caernarfon

Much of the coastal heath on the Llŷn is common land and also designated for its international bird interest (chough). There are issues with grazing intensity – some areas it is difficult to get grazing whilst other areas are heavily grazed. The National Trust and Crown Estates are major landowners of common land in this constituency. Thirty commons are within the AONB and 35 are within the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA – agri-environment scheme).

#### **Carmarthen East and Dinefwr**

- Overall common land area: 15052ha
- Number of common land units: 69
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 5607ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 23
- % of common land that is SSSI: 37.2%
- Area of National Park: 9149ha
- % of common land that National Park 61%

#### Key features of commons in Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

Many small commons but a significant area is found on the Black Mountain. Grazing rights are primarily for sheep and cattle and burning is a common management tool. The Crown Estate and Brecon Beacons National Park are major landowners but a significant number have no known owner.

#### **Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire**

- Overall common land area: 142ha
- Number of common land units: 11
- Area of common land that is SSSI: 27ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 3
- % of common land that is SSSI: 19%

### Key features of commons in Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire

Several have no registered rights.

## **Ceredigion**

The common land registers in Ceredigion are in the process of reconstruction following errors in original compilation. Following this reconstruction, precise extent and definitive figures may vary. The figures presented below are based on the Biological Survey of Common Land Report, 1990.

- Overall common land area: 12,202 ha
- Number of common land units: 126
- Area of common land that is SSSI: 6,406 ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 43
- % of common land that is SSSI: 52.5%

### Key features of commons in Ceredigion

There are a wide variety of habitats on common land in Ceredigion but heathland is the most common. Similarly, there are a variety of different rights registered, but grazing by sheep and cattle are the most widely exercised and many areas are heavily grazed.

## **Clwyd West**

- Overall common land area: 8067ha
- Number of common land units: 45
- Area of common land that is SSSI: 2530ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 7
- % of common land that is SSSI: 31%

### Key features of commons in Clwyd West

Many commons are in large upland blocks such as Mynydd Hiraethog, which comprises five common land units, and Garn Prys a further nine. The Crown Estate is a major landowner of common land. Rights are primarily for sheep grazing.

## Clwyd South

- Overall common land area: 6309ha
- Number of common land units: 47
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 2137ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 31
- % of common land that is SSSI: 34%

### Key features of commons in Clwyd South

Most commons are under 100ha and habitats are varied across the constituency. Management is primarily for sheep but there is some grouse management. Ownership is with various private owners and the Wynnstay Estate.

## Conwy

- Overall common land area: 6209ha
- Number of common land units: 12
- Area of common land that is SSSI: 3163ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 11
- % of common land that is SSSI: 51%
- Area of National Park: 3477ha
- % of common land that National Park 56%

### Key features of commons in Conwy

Wide variety of commons in this area, with the majority being under 100ha and comprising upland heath and grassland habitats. There is a variable distribution of rights with some commons having large numbers registered and others with little or no rights on them. The Crown estate is a major landowner.

## Delyn

- Overall common land area: 781ha
- Number of common land units: 7
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 645ha

- Number of commons that are SSSI: 2
- % of common land that is SSSI: 87%

#### Key features of commons in Delyn

Most commons are small, with one unit comprising a majority of total area. Current management varies, with a mixture of grazing by cattle, horses, sheep, combined with mowing. Several commons are used for recreation.

### **Gower**

- Overall common land area: 7925ha
- Number of common land units: 41
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 4225ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 12
- % of common land that is SSSI: 53%

#### Key features of commons in Gower

Most are coastal habitats and recreation is a key feature mixed with agricultural uses. Lack of fencing of roads is an issue for stock grazing in some areas.

### **Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney**

- Overall common land area: 6861ha
- Number of common land units: 4
- Area of common land that is SSSI: 8ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 2
- % of common land that is SSSI: <1%

#### Key features of commons in Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney

Species-poor grasslands and reclaimed colliery spoil tips. *Molinia*-dominated grasslands, with some areas of blanket bog and acidic flushes, and some base-rich grassland. Grazing is heavy in most areas and performed by cattle, horses and sheep.

## Meirionnydd Nant Conwy

- Overall common land area: 14583ha
- Number of common land units: 124
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 8942ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 54
- % of common land that is SSSI: 61%
- Area of National Park: 13552ha
- % of common land that National Park 93%

### Key features of commons in Meirionnydd Nant Conwy

Much of the common land in this constituency is in the Snowdonia National Park and has high natural conservation value. The habitats represented on commons vary from heath, blanket bog, grassland, woodland and ffridd. Sheep provide the main form of grazing and management. The Crown Estate is a major landowner.

## Monmouth

- Overall common land area: 6666ha
- Number of common land units: 36
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 2904ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 15
- % of common land that is SSSI: 44%
- % of common land that National Park 85%

### Key features of commons in Monmouth

Many commons in Monmouth are woodland and management activities are related to woodland management, although a significant number are grassland and under agricultural usage.

Recreation is a feature of many commons. Five commons are within the AONB.

## Montgomeryshire

- Overall common land area: 8033ha
- Number of common land units: 74
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 1698ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 15

- % of common land that is SSSI: 21%

#### Key features of commons in Montgomeryshire

16 commons are within the Environmentally Sensitive Area (agri-environment scheme). Llangynog is a large area comprising seven common land units. Commons are typically upland heath, grassland and bracken. Sheep are the main form of management although rights of estovers (collecting of timber, brush or fern) are practised. Commons are owned by a large number of different private owners and the Wynnstay estate.

#### **Neath Port Talbot**

- Overall common land area: 1324ha
- Number of common land units: 9
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 67ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 1
- % of common land that is SSSI: 5%

#### Key features of commons in Neath Port Talbot

Habitats include acid-rich, and *Molinia*-rich grasslands, *Calluna* and *Vaccinium* heaths, with *Nardus*-dominated hill slopes, and quaking bogs. Several sites managed by burning, with variable intensity grazing by cattle, sheep and horses.

#### **Newport West**

- Overall common land area: 825ha
- Number of common land units: 3
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 65ha
- Number of SSSI: 2
- % of common land that is SSSI: 8%

#### Key features of commons in Newport West

Rivers Usk and Ebbw Foreshores Common encompasses large areas of sand and intertidal mud, with saltmarsh.

## Newport East

- Overall common land area: 65ha
- Number of common land units: 7
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 6ha
- Number of SSSI: 3
- % of common land that is SSSI: 9%

### Key features of commons in Newport East

Standing water, invertebrate assemblage, *Odontamia ornata* ( a soldier fly)

## Ogmore

- Overall common land area: 1687ha
- Number of common land units: 9
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 61ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 3
- % of common land that is SSSI: 3.6

### Key features of commons in Ogmore

Commons in Ogmore comprise a variety of habitats including: healthy grassland with scattered bracken, acidic grassland, marshy grasslands, dry oak woodland, wet alder woodland, scrub, and improved grassland. Grazing varies from none to heavy and intense.

## Preseli Pembrokeshire

- Overall common land area: 5741ha
- Number of common land units: 163
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 3754 ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 49
- % of common land that is SSSI: 65%
- Area of common land National Park 4607ha
- % of common land in National Park 80%

### Key features of commons in Preseli Pembrokeshire

Much of the common land is within the National Park and designated for nature conservation interest. There are a wide variety of habitats from coastal heath to scrub and grassland and more upland areas in the Preseli mountains. Management varies with cattle, sheep, horses and burning all employed, although significant areas have no rights registered and there are issues with under-management. The National Trust is a significant landowner.

### **Swansea – East**

- Overall common land area: 33ha
- Number of common land units: 2
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 0.44ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 1
- % of common land that is SSSI: 1.3%

### Key features of commons in Swansea East

*Molinia*-dominated grassland with flushes and rush pasture, marshy grassland. One unit includes a burial ground. Urban fringe commons.

### **Torfaen**

- Overall common land area: 3359 ha
- Number of common land units: 9
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 1.7 ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 1
- % of common land that is SSSI: <1%
- Area of National Park: 793ha
- % of common land that National Park 22%

### Key features of commons in Torfaen

Standing water, bird assemblage.

## Vale of Clwyd

- Overall common land area: 292 ha
- Number of common land units: 11
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 23 ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 2
- % of common land that is SSSI: 7.9%

### Key features of commons in Vale of Clwyd

Most are below 100ha and incorporate a wide variety of habitats, mostly grassland and woodland. Sheep grazing is the primary form of management although a number of commons have no rights currently registered and this may cause an issue for future management.

## Wrexham

- Overall common land area: 2013ha
- Number of common land units: 29
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 1570ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 20
- % of common land that is SSSI: 78%

### Key features of commons in Wrexham

Most are below 100ha and incorporate a wide variety of habitats. The Frondeg and Ruabon areas have a significant amount of common land, the majority of which are heath habitats. Current management varies on each common with grazing rights for sheep being the most widespread. Burning. Grouse. The Wynnstay and Crown estates are owners of 31 of the commons in this constituency.

## Ynys Môn

- Overall common land area: 846ha
- Number of common land units: 29
- Area of common land that is SSSI : 474ha
- Number of commons that are SSSI: 16
- % of common land that is SSSI: 56%

### Key features of commons in Ynys Mon

Many commons on Ynys Mon are small and several have little or no management in place. A number have no rights registered. Most are coastal heath and grassland habitats.

*The constituencies below were found to contain insignificant amounts of common land, or no common land incorporated into a SSSI, based on the available data. The constituencies of Aberavon, Llanelli and Rhondda, according to available data, contained no common land.*

### **Islwyn**

- Overall common land area: 213ha
- Number of common land units: 2

### Key features of commons in Islwyn

Commons in this region have extensive areas of species-poor *Molinia* marshy grassland, with small areas of dwarf shrub heath

### **Cynon Valley**

- Overall common land area: 1113ha
- Number of common land units: 3

### Key features of commons in Cynon Valley

Mixture of habitats, including marshy grasslands and oak woodland, but mainly open moorland with *Vaccinium* heath, bracken and acidic grasslands. Grazing, which can be heavy in areas, by sheep and cattle.

### **Alyn & Deeside**

- Overall common land area: 32ha
- Number of common land units: 1

### Key features of commons in Alyn & Deeside

Diverse mixture of grassland, with varied grazing.

### **Cardiff – North**

- Overall common land area: 1.5ha
- Number of common land units: 1

### Key features of commons in Cardiff North

Ungrazed grassland with a scattering of trees.

### **Cardiff – South and Penarth**

- Overall common land area: 6.3ha
- Number of common land units: 2

### Key features of commons in Cardiff South and Penarth

Improved grassland bounded by a species-rich ditches, which are moderately grazed by cattle. Small areas of secondary woodland and scrub.

### **Swansea – West**

- Overall common land area: 50ha
- Number of common land units: 3

### Key features of commons in Swansea West

*Molinia* grasslands, which are species-rich in places; drier slopes are scrub-covered. One unit comprises a coastal golf course of calcareous grassland with scattered trees.

### **Pontypridd**

- Overall common land area: 235ha
- Number of common land units: 3

### Key features of commons in Pontypridd

Acidic, and *Molinia*-dominated grasslands, restricted areas of bracken. Grazing by cattle, sheep and horses, with some burning.

### **Vale of Glamorgan**

- Overall common land area: 118ha
- Number of common land units: 9

### Key features of commons in Vale of Glamorgan

Many have no grazing or very low grazing intensity.

## **Annex B**

### **Photographs of case study commons and maps**

#### **Abergwesyn**

- 1: View across the common showing large areas of Moor Grass.
- 2: Close-up of moor grass dominated area.
- 3: View across to sample area showing blanket bog and area of erosion.
- 4: View of sample area.
- 5: Close-up of blanket bog.
- 6: One of the few wetter areas on the blanket bog.
- 7: Close-up showing two heath species.
- 8: View showing erosion over hag area.

#### **Castle Down**

- 1: View across road showing area of open calcareous grassland with bracken encroaching at the edges.
- 2: View of upper area of common showing bracken dominance.
- 3: View across road showing sample area on left hand side, scrub and bracken encroachment in foreground and on far bank.
- 4: Close-up of scrub encroachment.
- 5: General view showing mosaic of grassland with gorse and bracken.
- 6: Close-up of species rich calcareous grassland in good condition.
- 7: Sample area showing calcareous grassland and encroaching bracken and scrub.
- 8: Encroaching scrub and bracken on edge of sample area.
- 9: Thick gorse scrub.
- 10: Close-up of damp heath.
- 11: Overgrazing on the coastal strip of the common.

## **Llanbedr / Llandeilo**

- 1: View across area of dominant bracken.
- 2: Lower area of bracken and damp rushy area.
- 3: The sample area of wet heath.
- 4: Close up of heath in good condition.
- 5: Edge of heath area showing bracken and acid grassland.
- 6: Area of acid grassland showing well grazed gorse bushes.

## **Llangyndeyrn**

- 1: The sample area of bog.
- 2: Close-up of an area of good condition.
- 3: Area of moor grass dominated bog.
- 4: View across bog showing willow scrub.
- 5: View across bracken areas and road to bog.
- 6: View in opposite direction showing patches of grass, grazing ponies and bracken encroachment.

## **Uwchgwyrfai**

- 1: Close-up of recovering burnt heath in sample area.
- 2: View across recovering burnt heath.
- 3: Close-up of unburnt heath.
- 4: View across sample area showing unburnt section in centre.
- 5: Recovering heath in grassland on edge of Moel Tryfan.
- 6: Acid grassland on previously overgrazed area of Moel Tryfan.
- 7: View showing effects of stock exclusion and recovering heath.

## Annex B Continued:

### Photographs and maps of case study commons

#### Abergwesyn:

1: View across the common showing large areas of Moor Grass.



2: Close up of moor grass dominated area.



3: View across to sample area showing blanket bog and area of erosion.



4: View of sample area.



## Abergwesyn continued:

5: Close up of blanket bog.



6: One of the few wetter areas on the blanket bog.



7: Close up showing two heath species.



8: View showing erosion over hag area.



## Castle Down:

1:View across road showing area of open calcareous grassland with bracken encroaching at the edges.



2: View of upper area of common showing bracken dominance.



3:View across road showing sample area on left hand side, scrub and bracken encroachment in foreground and on far bank.



4: Close up of scrub encroachment.



## Castle Down continued:

5: General view showing mosaic of grassland with gorse and bracken.



6: Close up of species rich calcareous grassland in good condition.



7: Sample area showing calcareous grassland and encroaching bracken and scrub.



8: Encroaching scrub and bracken on edge of sample area.



## Castle Down continued:

9: Thick gorse scrub.



10: Close up of damp heath.



11: Overgrazing on the coastal strip of the common.



## Llanbedr / Llandeilo:

1: View across area of dominant bracken.



2: Lower area of bracken and damp rushy area.



3: The sample area of wet heath.



4: Close up of heath in good condition.



## Llanbedr / Llandeilo continued:

5: Edge of heath area showing bracken and acid grassland.



6: Area of acid grassland showing well grazed gorse bushes.



## langyndeyrn:

1: The sample area of bog.



2: Close up of an area of good condition.



## Llangyndeyrn continued:

3: Area of moor grass dominated bog.



4: View across bog showing willow scrub.



5: View across bracken areas and road to bog.



6: View in opposite direction showing patches of grass, grazing ponies and bracken encroachment.



## Uwchgwyrfai:

1: Close up of recovering burnt heath in sample area.



2: View across recovering burnt heath.



3: Close up of unburnt heath.



4: View across sample area showing unburnt section in centre.



## Uwchgwyrfai continued:

5: Recovering heath in grassland on edge of Moel Tryfan.



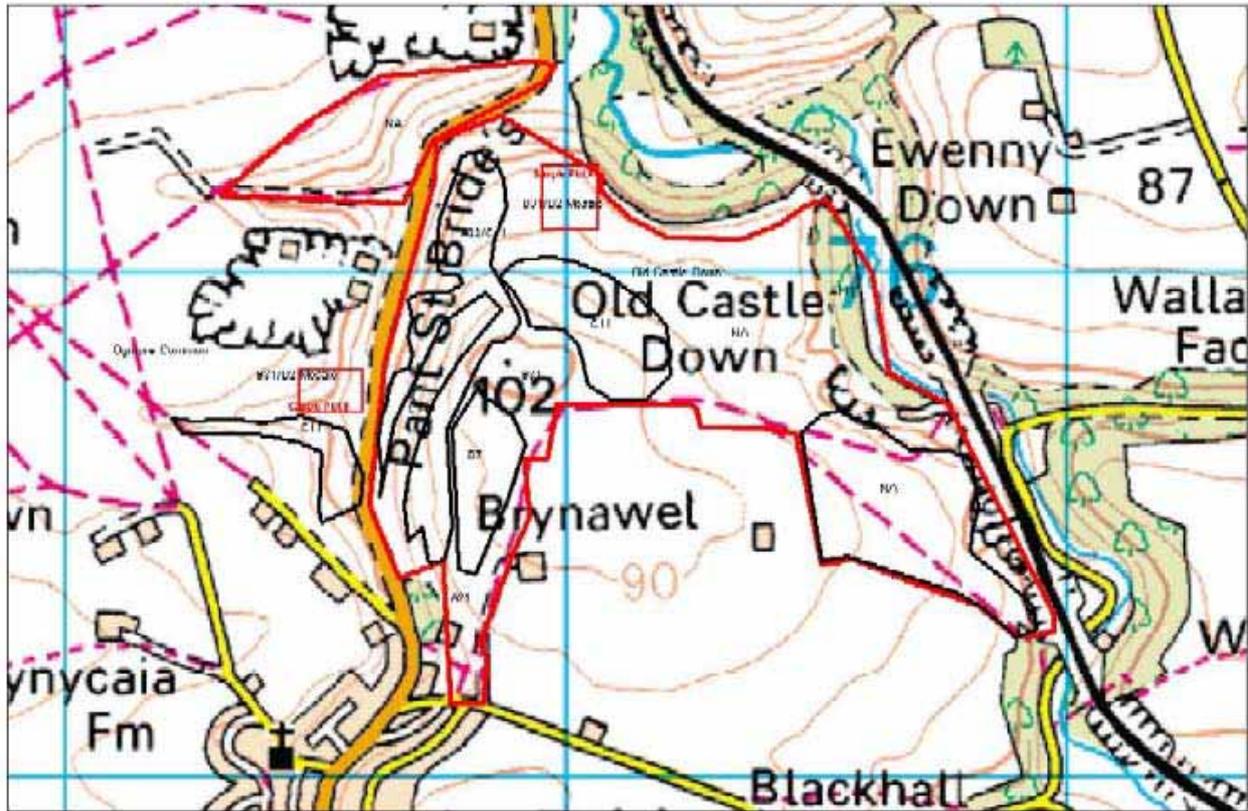
6: Acid grassland on previously overgrazed area of Moel Tryfan.



7: View showing effects of stock exclusion and recovering heath.

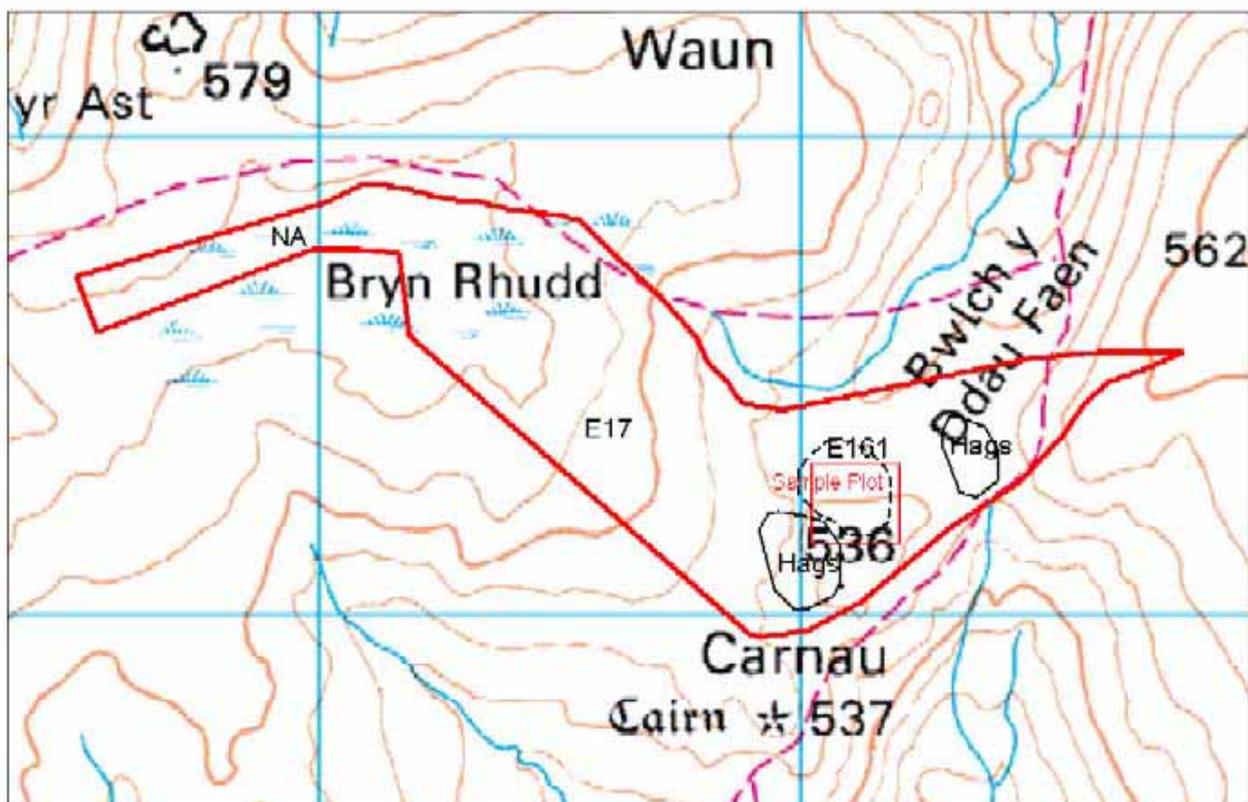


## CASTLE DOWN



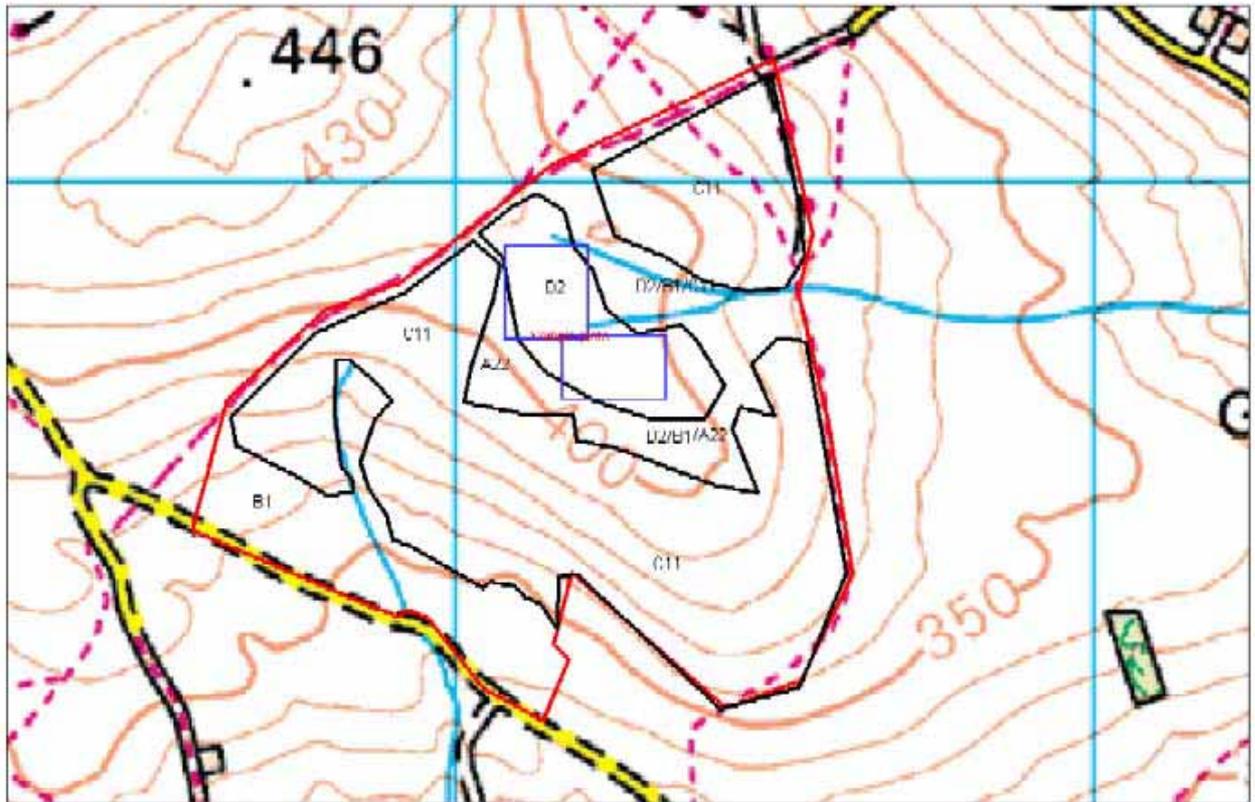
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## ABERGWESYN



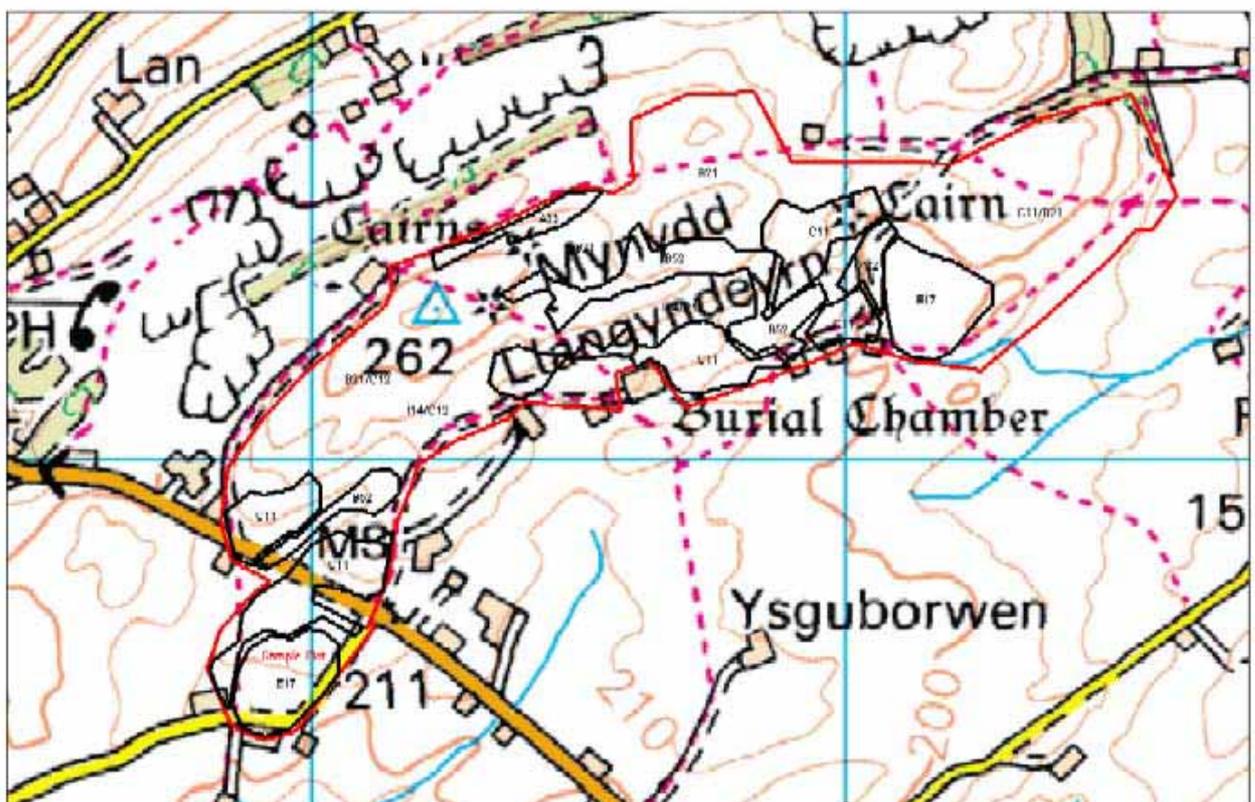
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## LLANBEDR



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## LLANGYNDEYRN



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