

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**Unitary Authority:** Pembrokeshire  
**Site Name:** Gweunydd Blaencleddau  
**Date of Notification:** 23 October 2000

**Introduction:**

This management statement outlines the way in which the SSSI needs to be managed in order to maintain its special interest. It also provides a basis for future discussions and decisions on the conservation management of the SSSI.

The document sets out a vision for the features of interest; it describes the key issues affecting the features of interest and outlines any management considered necessary to safeguard those features.

It is very important to recognise that management may need to change with time. Problems that we are aware of today may be resolved or completely removed and new unforeseen problems may arise. New improved management techniques may also become available. Consequently the management outlined in this document is considered appropriate for the short term but may need to change in the long term.

**Features of Special Scientific Interest:**

1. Marsh Fritillary
2. Southern Damselfly
3. Marshy Grassland
4. Flush
5. Fen
6. Wet Heath
7. Blanket Mire

**Long Term Vision for the Site and Features**

CCW aim to see a large, healthy population of the marsh fritillary butterfly on the site. The butterfly is dependent here on certain types of marshy grassland and flush, with tussocks of purple moor-grass and plenty of the caterpillar's main food-plant, devil's bit scabious. These swards need to vary in height so that there are short 'lawn' areas for the caterpillars to sun themselves on, and taller tussocky areas to provide shelter.

CCW aim to see healthy populations of the southern damselfly on the site. The damselfly is found in areas where water seeps out of the ground and forms flushes or small streams. (Some of these) should have a mix of shallow open water and plants such as marsh St. John's wort, bogbean and short sedges.

CCW aim to see all areas of marshy grassland, flush, fen, wet heath and blanket mire kept or increased. Increases in these habitats should generally take place at the expense of less significant habitats such as semi-improved grassland or scrub. In some places it may be appropriate to encourage the development of near-natural habitats, such as blanket bog, at the expense of some of the more modified marshy grassland.

Marshy grassland should cover at least 40% of the site and display a range of plant and insect species typical of the habitat. At least three-quarters of the marshy grassland should have an abundance of purple moor-grass in an uneven, low sward with plenty of devil's bit scabious. This type of marshy grassland is of particular importance for the marsh fritillary butterfly. The remainder of the marshy grassland should have an abundance of sharp-flowered rush, with plenty of characteristic wetland flowers such as marsh bedstraw and greater bird's-foot trefoil.

Flushes should cover at least 10% of the site and display a range of plant and insect species typical of the habitat. The majority of the flushes will naturally support carpets of bog moss below a canopy of tall rushes or sedges. A proportion (at least 15%) should support short, open vegetation rich in small mosses, sedges and wildflowers characteristic of less acidic conditions. This combination of tall and short flush types is needed by the southern damselfly.

Fen should cover at least 2% of the site and display a range of plant species typical of the habitat. Bottle sedge should be abundant over carpets of bog mosses, 'brown' mosses or swamp species such as marsh cinquefoil.

Wet heath should cover at least 7% of the site and display a range of plant species typical of the habitat. Most of the wet heath should have a mixture of tussocks of purple moor-grass, separated by closely grazed patches rich in deer grass, bog mosses and heathers such as cross-leaved heath. A proportion should also have a range of short sedges and flowering plants such as round leaved sundew.

Blanket mire should cover at least 5% of the site and display a range of plant species typical of the habitat. Most of the blanket mire should have tussocks of purple moor-grass, with hare's-tail cotton-grass, bog mosses and heathers such as cross-leaved heath.

### **Key Management Issues:**

The habitats of importance here have largely been created and maintained by traditional forms of management such as grazing, mowing and burning. The species of importance here have fairly exact needs which this management has traditionally supplied. More intensive agricultural operations would damage the conservation value of the site.

### **Grazing**

Extensive grazing in spring and summer is ideal. Grazing should aim to keep scrub and coarse plants such as purple moor-grass in check, and maintain an uneven patchwork of short and long vegetation. Vegetation across much of the site should vary from around ankle height to around knee height. Hardier breeds of beef cattle or ponies are ideal grazers, but sheep are not as they

eat out the devil's bit scabious plants needed by the marsh fritillary caterpillars. Parts of the site favoured by the southern damselfly may need to be grazed more heavily to stop the flushes from choking up with plants and silt.

### **Burning**

Winter burning is sometimes used as a traditional method of keeping moor-grass in check. CCW advise against burning on this site, as it could have damaging effects. The build up of moor-grass litter over recent years would give a hot, slow burn which would kill marsh fritillary caterpillars and other insects. Tussocks of purple moor-grass are fire-resistant, and can grow back more vigorously after a burn. Accidental summer burns are also damaging, and efforts should be made to prevent these from occurring.

### **Mowing**

Mowing can be a good way of restoring neglected habitats. Areas of tall purple moor-grass tussocks with a build up of dead leaf-litter should be targeted. The moor-grass will re-grow from the cut base, and smaller wetland plants will have a chance to grow in between the tussocks. Cuttings should be collected and removed to avoid smothering this re-growth and enriching the soil. Only a proportion of a field should be cut in any one year, and the aim should be to create a varied pattern of cut and uncut areas. Mowing is not an ideal way of keeping the vegetation down in the long term, as this sudden removal is more damaging to insects than the gradual impact of extensive grazing.

### **Scrub Cutting**

Some cutting of gorse and willow scrub would be desirable in parts of the site, to allow the habitats of special interest to expand. It would be best to cut a little each year between October and February, and remove cuttings from the site. Treatment of the stumps with an appropriate herbicide may be necessary to prevent re-growth.

### **Peat Cutting**

Although in the past this was a traditional activity here, removing peat could damage the blanket bog. Any new peat cutting would have to be small-scale and done carefully with guidance from CCW.

### **Nutrient Enrichment**

Fertilisers should not be used on the site, as this would damage the vegetation by encouraging agricultural species. Where possible, fertiliser use on fields adjoining the SSSI should be limited, to avoid enriching water draining on to the marshy grassland from outside the site. Other activities which could lead to enrichment problems, such as supplementary stock-feeding or storage of cut vegetation, should take place on adjoining land.

### **Drainage**

The marshy grassland is dependent on the maintenance of a natural or traditional drainage pattern. No new drainage systems should be put in place, and any maintenance of the existing drainage system should be done carefully with guidance from CCW. Any pond creation or management should be done sensitively with similar guidance.