

Appendix 7Q

Classification and Evaluation of Habitats within the Existing Baseline

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Table 7.15: Habitat classification, notable plants and evaluation.

Vegetation type	Summary of vegetation community descriptions	NVC category (most closely aligned)	Notable vascular plants	Evaluation (conservation significance)
Semi-natural broad-leaved woodland	Small examples of W11 upland oak woodland, and W9 upland mixed ash woodland present near site perimeter.	W11	-	These are Section 7 habitats / UK BAP habitats and include small remnants of ancient woodland. SINC guidance⁹ states that, the following should be considered for selection: All ancient woodlands as recorded in the Ancient Woodland Inventories, apart from those felled and replanted with non-native species which have also entirely lost their ancient features such as characteristic ground flora semi-natural woodlands, of whatever size, which support

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				an assemblage of ancient woodland indicator species · all semi-natural beech and yew woodlands all semi-natural upland woodlands all semi-natural wet woodlands planted / re-planted wet woodland with semi-natural ground flora or other areas of interest such as ditches, pools and marshy areas.
Plantation and scrub woodland	Relatively young habitats with limited botanical diversity.	W21 / W6	Sherard's downy rose (or a possible hybrid of it), several non-native invasive Cotoneaster species, particularly hollyberry cotoneaster, and Bird cherry (probably planted).	-
Conifer plantation	Relatively young and even-aged, with only a sparse ground flora. The large population of Common	Unclassified	Common wintergreen.	Powys LBAP habitat. Common wintergreen is a 'Primary' species, therefore qualifying the habitat as SINC quality.

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	Wintergreen is of importance in a county context.			
Acid grassland – unimproved (in mosaic with dry heathland)	Patchily distributed through much of the Study Area and mainly represented by U1 and U4 grassland, sometimes forming mosaics with other vegetation. Most of the acid grassland is relatively species-poor and in a heavily-grazed state.	U1 / U4	-	Not a priority habitat or habitat of principal importance (since this refers to lowland habitats only). SINC guidance ⁹ states that all areas of unimproved acid grassland should be considered for selection as a SINC.
Semi-improved acid grassland	Many extensive examples, especially on well-drained slopes associated with former mining activity. Including some areas with high densities of ant-hills.	U4 / U5	-	Not a priority habitat or habitat of principal importance (since this refers to lowland habitats only). SINC guidance states ⁹ that all areas of unimproved acid grassland should be considered for selection, where they support a relatively high diversity of indicator species.

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Neutral grassland	Mostly limited to small patches and roadside strips, mainly MG5 and MG1 but very variable in species diversity.	MG5	-	SINC guidance⁹ states that all examples of MG5 grassland should be considered for selection as a SINC. S7 / UK BAP lowland meadow which includes meadow / pasture in non-agricultural settings such as roadside verges. Lowland meadows is also a Powys LBAP habitat.
Sparse grassland on coal spoil and Washery sidings / short perennial	Many variations on U1 grassland. There is a full spectrum of cover and diversity from almost bare spoil to very high diversity vegetation which includes locally uncommon species.	Unclassified	Small cudweed, viviparous fescue, brown sedge, bee orchid and eye bright	Small cudweed, viviparous fescue, brown sedge, bee orchid and eyebright are 'Contributory' species, and viviparous fescue is a 'Primary' species, therefore qualifying the habitat as SINC quality. In addition, this habitat qualifies as a SINC and UKBAP habitat as a 'open

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				mosaic on previously developed land’.
Dry heath / Dry heath and acid mosaic	The Study Area supports very few examples of heath with >25% cover by dwarf shrub species that would qualify as the S7 habitat ‘upland heathland’. The largest area is in the restoration area in the centre of the site, which supports H1 heath. Heath is mostly only present as mosaic component amongst acid grassland on former colliery slopes.	H1	-	Small number of areas with S7 upland heathland / UK BAP Dwarf shrub heath SINC guidance⁹ states that all examples of unmodified dry heathland should be considered for selection as a SINC. Examples of degraded heathland secondary heathland and grass heath mixtures which meet the designation as acid grassland or which have at least 10% dwarf shrub heath.
Wet heath / marshy grassland mosaic	Only a few small examples present, and mostly M25 mire, grading into other habitat mosaics. All that were seen support a good range of species.	M25	-	S7 and UK BAP. SINC guidance⁹ states that all examples of unmodified wet heath and wet grass heath, should be considered for selection as a SINC.

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Sphagnum-rich bog vegetation	Only a few small areas are present, but they all support uncommon plants and all occur in association with other diverse marshy grassland and heath.	M6	Royal fern.	SINC guidance ⁹ states that all examples of undegraded bog habitat, and degraded bog habitats which still show some remaining distinctive features, should be considered for selection as a SINC. Royal fern is a 'Contributory' species, in the SINC guidance.
Marshy grassland	Several relatively large areas are present that are dominated by Purple Moor-grass (M25 mire) and rush pasture (M23 mire). The most diverse would qualify as the S7 habitat 'Purple Moor-grass and rush pastures'. An extensive area of diverse, minerotrophic M23 / M24 marshy grassland is present in	M25 (species poor – where ungrazed), M23. M22, U4, MG10	In species rich areas - the flower-rich sward includes a number of locally uncommon species, such as marsh lousewort and brookweed.	Species rich examples qualify as S7 habitat 'Purple Moor-grass and rush pastures'. <u>Only occurs in the Washery.</u> SINC guidance ⁹ states that species rich examples of M23 and M25 should be considered for selection as a SINC. Brookweed is a 'Contributory' species in the SINC guidance. <u>Only present in the Washery.</u>

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	wet fields with coal spoil north of the Washery. A high proportion of marshy grassland on recently restored farmland is species poor MG10 rush pasture with negligible value.			
Flush vegetation	Several small M23 flushes are present; mostly at the margins of the grazed upland areas. They support a diverse sward with locally uncommon plant species.	M23	Several locally uncommon species were found in association with flushes, including ivy-leaved bellflower, whorled caraway and bog pimpernel (although no quadrats included the ivy-leaved bellflower).	SINC guidance⁹ states that all examples of individual neutral, basic or acid flushes of any size, providing they are not grossly modified by agricultural improvement.
Swamp	Several areas of swamp vegetation are present, but they are mostly too small to qualify as priority habitat. Only one small area of S4 reedbed is present, but this is relatively small and species-poor.	S3, S7, S12 and S4	-	SINC guidance⁹ states that all examples of reedbed and other tall swamps should be considered for selection as a SINC. UK BAP / S7 habitat

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Ponds	There is an extensive network of ponds within the site. They are of man-made origin but support a variety of vegetation types, including several locally rare plant species such as floating bur-reed.	Affinities with M23, S19, M29, M6 and OV35 and A24.	Floating bur-reed, lesser bulrush, and spiked water-milfoil.	UKBAP / S7 habitat. SINC guidance⁹ states that all examples of lakes and ponds which have largely unmodified, semi-natural beds and banks, good water quality and or which support good aquatic, emergent or bankside plant communities. Ponds are modified but some support aquatic plant communities. Floating bur-reed and lesser bulrush are 'Contributory' species, and spiked water-milfoil is a 'Primary' species, therefore qualifying the habitat as SINC quality.
Ditches	There are a range of ditch types within the site. Most are small with a limited wetland flora. Several larger ones support a more diverse flora.	Variation of M23, S12, S19, and OV28	-	-

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River and streams	The Afon Dulais is the only river within the study area. It has a natural channel profile with a naturally meandering course and is bordered by diverse wetland vegetation and therefore meets the wildlife sites qualifying criteria. A number of tributaries of the Afon Dulais, Llech and tawe are presen within the Site.	M23 / M27	-	SINC habitat. UKBAP / S7 habitat. Powys LBAP habitat.