

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXAMINATION

SESSION 7: EMPLOYMENT AND MIXED USE SITES

THE COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES' RESPONSE TO THE
INSPECTOR'S QUESTIONS (REF NO:10)

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There will also be a loss of species rich acid grassland at the northern most end of the site along with an area of grassland described as 'other grassland'. This grassland has colonised bare ground and on which lapwing, skylark and brown hare have been recorded as breeding. Since the last SINC survey of the SINC in 2007 when 50% was grassland, this area will have become less suitable to these species as vegetation has colonised and vegetation has become more dense.

As a result of the focussed changes, a small reduction in the extent of the allocation is proposed (FC10.B). This relates to increasing the size of the green wedge ENV1.2. The habitat directly affected and benefiting from this proposed change is species rich acid grassland.

Whilst this change is welcomed, CCW consider that on account of the size and nature of the habitats that will be lost as a result of the proposed development, the impact on the Bryn Serth SINC will be significant. As a result, CCW consider that appropriate mitigation should be sought for the loss of the BAP habitats. This should include better management of that part of the SINC that will remain unaffected by the proposed development. To compensate for the loss of purple moor-grass and rush pasture a priority BAP habitat, consideration may need to be given to mitigation off site.

Rhyd y Blew SINC

Rhyd y blew supports an artificial landscape due to past re-grading of the site, yet natural regeneration has established a mosaic of habitats with the central main plateau area (65% of the site) consisting of dry and damp grassland and rushes with areas of scrub and woodland around the periphery of the site.

The site is of historical important for its breeding lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), which continue to breed on site and is the main reason for the SINC designation. Prior to levelling of the site in 1996 Rhyd y blew supported 55 pairs. Lapwing continue to nest on the site though in much reduced numbers.

Other breeding birds recorded that are included on the Section 42 list include redshank, reed bunting, common snipe, skylark, meadow pipit, jack snipe and stonechat.

Assessment of the effects of development on Rhyd y Blew SINC

The allocation of MU1 within the LDP will effectively result in the loss of the entire SINC which extends to 26.3 ha.

Whilst this will not be significant in terms of BAP habitats, it will result in the loss of habitat that has developed to support a number of protected and declining bird species including lapwing that are listed on the Section 42 list. The habitats present are of local value and their loss would also have implications for habitat connectivity in the local area (see comments below).

In-combination with the loss of habitats at the adjacent Bryn Serth SINC, CCW consider the proposed development of Rhyd y Blew as significant and that it is

