

RHOSYDD LLANDDONA SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST



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YOUR SPECIAL SITE AND ITS FUTURE

Your Special Site and its Future' is part of our commitment to improve the way we work with Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) owners and occupiers. In it, we explain what is special about the wildlife / geology on your site, and what care is needed to look after its wildlife / geology into the future.

All SSSIs are considered to be of national importance and we recognise the crucial role that owners and occupiers play in their management and protection. We need you to share your views and knowledge of this site with us, to help safeguard it.

We hope that you will find 'Your Special Site and its Future' interesting and helpful. Please contact us if there is anything about the site and its management that you would like to discuss.

What is ‘special’ about the wildlife/geology at Rhosydd Llanddona SSSI?

Rhosydd Llanddona has two special features.

- Lowland heathland
Dry heathland is characterised by heather, western gorse and bell heather.
Wet heathland is characterised by cross-leaved heath.
- Black bog-rush – blunt-flowered rush fen

As well as the features listed above, Rhosydd Llanddona has other habitats that contribute to the special wildlife interest. These include fen, mire, woodland and grassland. This mixture of habitats is important for much of the wildlife. Unless specified below, management of this site should aim to look after these habitats as well as the listed feature of interest.

What do we want Rhosydd Llanddona to look like?

The following is a description of how we would like to see the features at Rhosydd Llanddona.

At least half of Tyn y Mynydd and two-thirds of Llaniestyn Common should be heathland of a varied structure; characterised by heather, bell heather, cross-leaved heath and western gorse. Bracken or scrub (including European gorse) may be scattered, but should not cover more than 10% of the site. Mire with plants such as black bog rush and blunt-flowered rush should be present in low lying areas, especially at Tyn y Mynydd. The uncommon plants, pale heath violet, lesser butterfly orchid and *Carex x fulva* should continue to be present in their current locations.

What management is needed on Rhosydd Llanddona SSSI and why?

The site’s special features have originated from natural factors such as thin, infertile soil, exposure to wind and poor drainage in conjunction with traditional farming methods such as extensive grazing and small patch burning. Changes in farming practices, such as the use of more intensive farming methods or a cessation of grazing, could damage the wildlife of the SSSI.

Although Rhosydd Llanddona is an excellent place for wildlife/geology it will only remain so if the necessary management continues. CCW’s priority is to work with you to ensure that this management is carried out.

What does this mean in practice?

There are a number of different factors that could damage the special features at Rhosydd Llanddona if they are not properly managed. These are the ones we regard as most important:

Grazing: Light grazing encourages the development and maintenance of the heathland and limits scrub encroachment. Cattle and ponies are the preferred grazers as they are better than sheep or large horses at opening up the dense clumps of gorse and are less selective. This means that more plants flower and set seed. They also

produce minor poaching of the ground enabling seedlings to establish. Animal dung is an important resource for many invertebrates and fungi and for the animals that feed upon them. Excessive grazing can convert heathland to grassland.

Supplementary feeding: Grazing levels should be set at levels which the site can support without the provision of additional food. Supplementary feeding can lead to excessive trampling, dunging and grazing in a very limited area. It also leads to nutrient inputs to the site from the feedstuff. The combination of increased nutrients and heavy livestock pressure is likely to lead to localized loss of heathland. The use of mineral licks may be acceptable, especially as a means of encouraging livestock into areas which are inadequately grazed.

Burning: During the winter, controlled small patch burning may be used to encourage new growth for livestock as part of an agreed heathland management scheme. A long-term plan should be agreed for firebreaks and annual burns. Burning can encourage regeneration of heather, help control scrub and enable stock access to the heathland, but caution should be taken before burning wet heath where mosses could be dried out. To avoid bracken invasion, grazing must follow burns, particularly on deeper soils. Controlled burning reduces the risk of large accidental burns, which can devastate large areas of heathland and grassland, particularly in summer. Burning needs to be undertaken with extreme caution and must be done in accordance with the Heather and Grass etc Burning (Wales) Regulations 2008.

Mowing: Mowing may be used to open up areas of scrub or bracken or to create access routes for livestock and should be followed with grazing. Mowing is an alternative to burning and would be particularly appropriate in parts of Tyn y Mynydd, adjacent to a conifer plantation. It would also be useful where the heather is very old and burning may be difficult to control, or where gorse dominance is a problem. It is most often used in the first instance to provide firebreaks. However, the cut material may mulch the ground, smothering regrowth and contributing to nutrient enrichment, so it should only be used when the material can be removed or in conjunction with grazing and/or burning.

Scrub and bracken management: Small patches of scrub and woodland provide shelter for invertebrates, nest sites and song posts for birds. However, uncontrolled expansion of trees and shrubs can lead to a loss of heathland interest. Scrub control should aim to prevent any further expansion of scrub and woodland and to restore selected areas to heathland. It should always be followed by grazing. Bruising bracken (or trampling with heavy stock in late spring) is preferable to using chemicals, although cutting trees and shrubs and applying herbicide to stumps or regrowth (dependant on species) may be the best method of ensuring they are killed.

Nutrients and fertilisers: Low soil fertility helps heather and western gorse to compete against more aggressive plants. The application of any fertiliser, slurry or off-farm waste should be avoided and animals should not be fed with silage on the site. No manure, compost or other nutrient rich material should be stored on or adjacent to the site.

Recreation: Llaniestyn Common is a Local Nature Reserve and as such, public access is to be encouraged. The maintenance of existing footpaths which allow

walkers to enjoy the heathland is entirely compatible with the maintenance of the SSSI. Indeed, such paths may provide firebreaks to assist in controlled management and to help limit impacts of unplanned burns. Footpaths should not become excessively wide, as this would result in a loss of heathland or other natural vegetation.

Finally

Our knowledge and understanding of wildlife/geology is continually improving. It is possible that new issues may arise in the future, whilst other issues may disappear. This statement is written with the best information we have now, but may have to change in the future as our understanding improves. Any information you can provide on the wildlife of your site, its management and its conservation would be much appreciated.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your SSSI, or have any concerns about your SSSI, please contact your local CCW office.

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