

Blaenau Gwent Wildlife Site/SINC Notification Form

SITE SUMMARY

WATERCOURSE NAME: **River Sirhowy**

GRID REF (start) SO 1100 1195

GRID REF (finish) SO 1646 0424

LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA: Blaenau Gwent

Length (approx.): c.11.3km

DATE OF SURVEY: Desk based: December 2008

FURTHER SITE INFORMATION

BROAD SITE DESCRIPTION

The River Sirhowy has its source on the slopes of Cefn Pyllau-duon above Tredegar. After flowing through Shon Sheffrey's Reservoir it turns south through Tredegar and then into Caerphilly via Blackwood and Pontllanfraith. It turns eastwards near Cwmfelinfach and joins the River Ebbw near Crosskeys.

In the vicinity of Tredegar the river is flanked for large sections by the A4048, housing and urban development. Further south, near Bedwellty Pits the river flows through a more open landscape, with sheep grazed anthill frequented grassland aligning the river to the north and south. Here the river displays greater physical naturalness with small meanders, riffles and exposed river sediment.

Extensive mining in the Sirhowy Valley, for metals and coal led to considerable pollution of the river in the past. However water quality is now much improved.

ADJACENT SINC/S/WILDLIFE SITES

The Sirhowy flows via Shon Sheffrey's Reservoir, an existing SINC, due primarily to the grassland interest on its banks.

Does the site already have any designations?

Yes No

If yes please state designation/s:.....

Known site history/ current management

In the past the River was affected detrimentally by extensive mining in the Sirhowy Valley.

Are there any LBAP Priority Habitats or Species present?

Habitats	Species
	SAP M5 European Otter

Official Use Only: Site selected as a Wildlife Site/SINC? YES NO Date:

Please state the section(s) of the Wildlife Site Guidelines that this site qualifies under:

H15) Watercourses

In line with the *Criteria for the Selection of SINC's in the Mid Valleys Area*, due to its linear nature, importance as a habitat corridor and extensive influence, a blanket linear designation is used for the Selection of the River Sirhowy.

The mosaic of features found in rivers and streams can support a diverse range of plants and animals. A wide range of habitats are associated with rivers and streams from the steep fast flowing conditions in the upper reaches of catchment areas, to meanders, shingle beds and sand bars in the mid to lower reaches.

Primary qualifying features include:

- Migratory (anadromous species) and resident populations of fish of conservation significance in the mid valleys, including salmon, bullhead & brown trout **(S5) Fish**.
 - *Includes salmon & bullhead in the upper reaches of the river, near Georgetown.*

Supporting reasons for designation include:

- Probable breeding Otter, plus areas for foraging, laying up and territorial use **(S1) Mammals**.
 - *Includes otter records near tributaries to east of Shon Sheffrey's reservoir & near Troedrhiwgwair.*
- In addition sections of the Sirhowy support breeding dipper **(S2 Birds)**.
(pers comm, GOS member)