CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS **DUHONW**

Date of Notification: 2002

National Grid Reference: SO 064508

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 147
1:10,000 Sheet number: SO 04 NW & NE, SO 05 SE

Site Area: 28 ha

Description:

River Wye

The Wye system, comprising the River Wye and several of its tributaries including the Duhonw, represents a large, linear ecosystem, which acts as an important wildlife corridor, an essential migration route and a key breeding area for many nationally and internationally important species. The Wye is of special interest for its associated plant and animal communities. Its character spans a range of types from an upland base-poor stream to an estuarine, silty lowland river. The river's overall diversity is a product of its underlying geology soil types, adjacent land use and hydrology.

The River Wye forms one of the longest rivers in England and Wales. From its source to its confluence the main channel is 250kms long, drains a catchment of 4136km sq. and has the fourth largest flow of any river in England and Wales. Rising at an altitude of 680m on Pumlumon Fawr in Powys, the Wye meanders down through Wales, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, finally entering the Severn Estuary at Chepstow.

Duhonw

The Duhonw is of special interest for its internationally important populations of otter *Lutra lutra* and Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*, as well as bullhead *Cottus gobio*.

The Duhonw supports both oligotrophic and mesotrophic aquatic communities and extensive areas of semi-natural riparian habitats can still be found along its banks. These include semi-natural woodland, dry and marshy grassland, stands of tall fen and marsh vegetation and gravel banks. The site also includes back channels that support otters and waterfowl and provide valuable refuges for small fish and invertebrates in times of flood.

The Duhonw rises at 435m on the slopes of Drum Ddu and flows north and then north east to join the Wye at Aberduhonw to the east of Builth Wells. It is joined by several smaller tributaries along its length, including the Nant Bwch, a small section of which is included within the boundary of the site.

The Duhonw catchment has developed on sedimentary rocks of Silurian age, including shales and

sandstones that are relatively base rich. The orientation of the watercourses is strongly influenced by the underlying solid geology. The upper Duhonw follows the boundary between the Old Red Sandstone of the Epynt plateau and underlying Ludlow shales. It flows over fault zones that give rise to waterfalls and rocky gorge sections. As it approaches the Wye, the river runs through a flood plain composed of glacial till, outwash gravels and more recent river alluvium. The soils in the catchment are generally neutral and mesotrophic but vary considerably in drainage, clay and organic content.

The upper Wye and its tributaries support one of the strongest populations of otters in England and Wales. This species is threatened by habitat destruction, disturbance and pollution throughout its European range. Otters rely on woodland, scrub and tall bankside vegetation for cover. Their holts can be located on the riverbank or in other suitable dense vegetation at some distance from the edge of the river channel.

A range of fish species occur in the Duhonw. The river provides important spawning areas for Atlantic salmon, and juvenile salmon are present throughout. Juvenile lamprey, either brook *Lampetra planeri* or river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatile* and Atlantic stream crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* have been recorded in the Duhonw.

The banks of the Duhonw are predominantly tree-lined, extending in parts to more extensive woodland, dominated by tree species such as alder *Alnus glutinosa*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. Plant species growing on the margins of the stream channel include meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, purple moor-grass *Molinea caerulea* and soft rush *Juncus effusus*, with brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* and ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* in the wetter areas. Submerged, aquatic vegetation includes water-starwort *Callitriche* spp. and pondweed *Potomogeton spp*. and a range of aquatic mosses and liverworts.

Although not of special interest, the site supports a range of breeding birds that are associated with riparian habitats, including grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, dipper *Cinclus cinclus* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. The river and bankside trees support large populations of flying insects, which provide an important food source for bats, including Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*.

Remarks:

The site supports the following habitats and species covered by the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora):

Common otter - Annex II and IV (of the Directive)
Atlantic salmon - Annex II and V
Bullhead - Annex II
River/Brook Lamprey – Annex II and V
Atlantic Stream Crayfish Annex II and V

Otter and Atlantic stream crayfish are also listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

The Duhonw flows directly into the River Wye (Upper Wye) SSSI.

public enquiry or any other hearing or appeal. If you require a full legal copy of the document please contact CCW in writing.