

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

AFON LLYNFI

Date of Notification: 2003

National Grid Reference: SO 175 386

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 161
1:10,000 Sheet number: SO 03 SE
SO 13 SW, SE, NE & NW

Site Area: 25.4 ha

Description:

River Wye

The Wye system, comprising the River Wye and several of its tributaries including the Afon Llynfi, 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.

Afon Llynfi

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

The Llynfi supports aquatic communities that are typical of streams of moderate to high nutrient status. Semi-natural riparian habitats include broadleaved woodland, dry and marshy grassland, stands of tall fen and marsh vegetation and gravel banks. The site also includes back channels and oxbows that support otters and waterfowl and provide valuable refuges for small fish and invertebrates in times of flood.

The Afon Llynfi comprises the Llynfi and two of its tributaries, the Dulas and Triffrwd brooks.

The Triffrwd rises at 200m AOD at Ponde and flows southeast until its convergence with the

Dulas, which rises at an altitude of 150m AOD near Felinfach, at Pont Trephilip. The Dulas then continues on its course east to Bronllys Castle where it flows into the Llynfi. Finally the Llynfi, which rose at an altitude of 170m AOD near Bwlch and flows north through Llangorse Lake, enters the Wye at Glasbury.

The solid geology of the Llynfi catchment consists predominantly of an alternating sequence of sandstones and silty-mudstones, the latter commonly containing calcareous bands some of which form individual beds of limestone (calcrete). This sequence of rocks, forming part of the Old Red Sandstone, ranges in age from the younger Silurian (Pridoli) to the younger part of the subsequent Lower Devonian (Breconian).

Locally deposited on the solid rock surface are a number of bodies of glacially transported sediments in the form of till or sands and gravels. These are all composed of the materials derived from the local solid rocks of the area. The soils are deep and moderately fertile giving rise to a relatively high nutrient status and silt load in the streams.

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 Afon Llynfi. The system provides important spawning areas for Atlantic salmon, and juvenile salmon are present throughout. Juvenile lamprey, likely to be brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri* or river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, have been recorded recently. Bullhead are abundant everywhere. Atlantic stream crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* have been recorded within the Afon Llynfi.

The site supports a range of breeding birds that are associated with riparian habitats, including grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*, dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and sand martin *Riparia riparia*. The river and bankside trees support large populations of flying insects, which provide an important food source for bats, including lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*.

Remarks:

The site is part of the River Wye/Afon Gwy candidate Special Area of Conservation and 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 lamprey – Annex II and V

Brook lamprey – Annex II and V

Atlantic stream crayfish – Annex II and V

Lesser horseshoe bat – 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 site is partly within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

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