

# EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

<b>Name:</b>	River Wye
<b>Unitary Authority/County:</b>	Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys
<b>SAC status:</b>	English part designated on 1 April 2005 Welsh part designated on 13 December 2004
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SO108369
<b>SAC EU code:</b>	UK0012642
<b>Area (ha):</b>	2234.89
<b>Component SSSI:</b>	Afon Irfon SSSI, Afon Llynfi SSSI, Bach Howey Gorge SSSI, Cae Lletty-yr-efail SSSI, Caeau Bryn-Du SSSI, Caeau Coed Mawr (Coedmawr Fields) SSSI, Carn Gafallt SSSI, Coed Aberdulas SSSI, Coed Aberedw SSSI, Coed Bryn-person SSSI, Coed y Ciliau SSSI, Colwyn Brook Marshes (North and South) SSSI, Duhonw SSSI, Erwood Dingle SSSI, Gweunydd Esgairdraenllwyn SSSI, Gweunydd Nant y Dernol SSSI, Ithon Valley Woodlands SSSI, Llwyn-cus SSSI, Llymwynt Brook Pastures SSSI, Maelienydd SSSI, Marcheini Uplands, Gilfach Farm and Gamallt SSSI, Rhos Penrhiw SSSI, Rhosydd Llanwrthwl SSSI, River Ithon SSSI, River Lugg SSSI, River Wye (Lower Wye) SSSI, River Wye (Tributaries) SSSI, River Wye (Upper Wye) SSSI, Upper Wye Gorge SSSI, Upper Wye Tributaries SSSI, Waen Rydd SSSI

### Site description:

The Wye, on the border of England and Wales, is a large river with a geologically mixed catchment, including shales and sandstones. There is a clear transition between the upland reaches, with characteristic bryophyte-dominated vegetation, and the lower reaches, with extensive water crow-foot *Ranunculus* beds. There is a varied water-crowfoot flora; stream water-crowfoot *R. penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans* is abundant, with other species – including the uncommon river water-crowfoot *R. fluitans* – found locally. Other species include flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus*, lesser water-parsnip *Berula erecta* and curled pondweed *Potamogeton crispus*. There is an exceptional range of aquatic flora in the catchment including river jelly-lichen *Collema dichotum*. The river channel is largely unmodified and includes some excellent gorges, as well as significant areas of associated woodland.

The Wye has a range of nutrient conditions and aquatic habitats and generally good water quality for fish species. It represents most of the habitat conditions in which bullhead *Cottus gobio* occurs in Britain. The site provides exceptionally good quality habitat for lampreys and supports healthy populations. The sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* population is found in the main stem below Llyswen, whilst river *Lamptera fluviatilis* and brook lampreys *L. planeri* are widely distributed in the catchment. The Wye also contains high-quality spawning grounds and juvenile habitat for Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* in both the main channel and tributaries.

Twaite shad *Alosa fallax* have long been abundant in the Wye. Twaite shad often spawn at or just above the tidal limit, but in the Wye they migrate over 100 km upstream, the highest spawning site being at Builth Wells. The river has relatively good water quality, adequate

flows through an unobstructed main channel and a wide range of aquatic habitats conducive to supporting this fish species. In particular, there are a number of deep pools essential for congregation before spawning. The river also supports allis shad *A. alosa*.

The Wye holds a dense and well-established otter *Lutra lutra* population. The bank-side vegetation cover, abundant food supply, clean water and undisturbed areas of dense scrub suitable for breeding, make it particularly favourable as otter habitat. The tributaries are the main haven for white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, particularly at the confluences of the main river and the Edw, Dulas Brook, Sgithwen and Clettwr Brook.

**Qualifying habitats:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Transition mires and quaking bogs. (Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface)
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation. (Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot)

**Qualifying species:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Allis shad *Alosa alosa*
- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*
- Otter *Lutra lutra*
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
- Twaite shad *Alosa fallax*
- White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012642

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The site is also entered in the Register of European Sites for Wales, maintained by the National Assembly for Wales.