

Consultation response

The Warren

General site info

The Warren is located just outside of the town of Hay on Wye. The Warren bathing site is accessed on foot along foot paths. Either from Hay on Wye or a small car park accessed via a bumpy track.

Ordnance Survey Maps show a 'Bathing Site' on the far bank; however, the application site is on the opposite southern bank. The bathing area is on a river meander and is an open shingle beach sloping into the water on the southern bank of the River Wye. The bathing water is divided by a tumbledown weir. Upstream of the weir the water is deep, slower flowing. Downstream of the weir the water is generally faster flowing, shallower in places with boulders beneath the surface.

Other river users include canoeists and anglers. The Warren itself is a riverside meadow owned by the Hay Warren Trust. The Warren meadow is used for walking, picnicking as well as hay making.

This is an open access site with no swim infrastructure, signs or lifesaving equipment.

Conservation and fisheries

As well as being in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, the site is also a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) Special area of Conservation (SAC) which are designated for riverine features.

The SSSI 'operations requiring consultation with Countryside Council for Wales (now NRW) includes: '*Recreational activities likely to damage riparian features or disturb species of interest*'. This means that recreational activities have been assessed as potentially damaging.

The site management statement for the SSSI states that increased recreational pressure could affect the river plants and animals through physical damage to habitats and increased disturbance. Recreational uses include canoeing, rafting, fishing, swimming, and walking.

One of our officers has approached trustees of the Warren for the need for a consent for recreation at this site in line with NRW online guidance and the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

There are many protected species which use this stretch of river. The protected sites designation documents should be referred to for a full list.

Of special note: this stretch is used for spawning by Brook and Sea Lamprey as well as Shad, salmon, bullhead, and trout. Under Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, it is a criminal offence for anyone to wilfully disturb spawn or spawning fish.

Several fish species (bullhead, salmon, shad and lamprey) are also protected here by the Wye SAC designation.

Salmonids, lamprey and shad spawn and lay their eggs in gravel substrate, where they are held in the interstitial spaces and oxygenated by the flowing water. Therefore, NRW fisheries officers recommended disturbances (such as walking over) gravel beds in spawning periods must be avoided.

A fisheries embargo period is applied to those looking to undertake in-river works in this part of the Wye runs from 15 Oct – 30 June. Therefore, NRW doesn't permit in-river activity within this period. This embargo period is a 'general rule' to protect salmonids (salmon and sea/brown trout) spawning over the winter months, shad spawning in April/May, lamprey spawning in May/June, and to protect eggs/newly hatched juveniles.

If a particular site does not have suitable spawning habitat for one/more of these species however, the embargo period may be shortened, but this requires sign off from NRW fisheries officers.

It is also flagged that a habitats risk assessment is being undertaken in relation to the impacts of canoe activity in this area.

Although not on site, there have been records of Giant Hogweed upstream of the weir on the left bank above the cottage.

Trustees of Hay Warren own the Warren Fishery which is a coarse fishery which includes this bathing site (right bank only).

It should be noted that there is a history of access discussions between anglers and canoeists around access to this stretch of the Wye.

According to our mapping system, there is only one water quality discharge in the immediate vicinity. There is a sewage pumping station with a permit to discharge during rainfall events to a culverted watercourse at SO 22193 42148, which feeds into the River Wye.

There is preliminary bathing water quality data which will be supplied to Welsh Government in a separate report as this is pilot data and entirely separate from the application.