

RIVER ELY

(AFON ELAI)

The River Ely (Afon Elai in Welsh) rises in the hills just north of Tonyrefail, flowing generally south-east towards Cardiff. Unusually for a river in this area, it does not have a reservoir in its headwaters. Before it passes under the M4, the Ely flows through Pontyclun where it is joined by its largest tributary, the Clun.

The Ely has a history of pollution from heavy industry, particularly in the Victorian period. Effluent from the coal, metal and paper industries all mixed with sewage pollution to create a chemical cocktail that in the late 1800s, even farm animals refused to drink. Although much improved since then, it is still one of the most polluted rivers in Wales.

ELY VALLEY

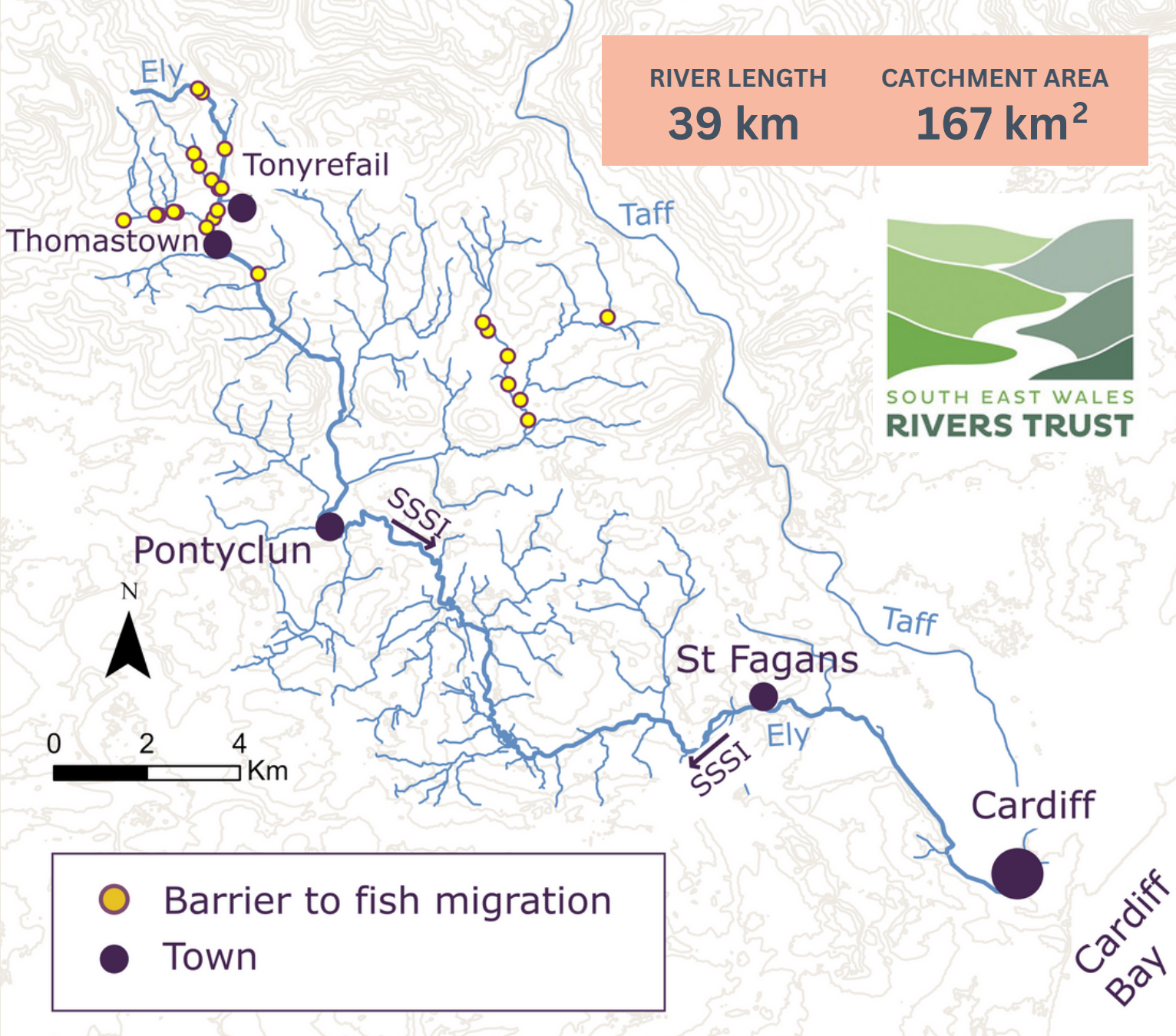
Site of Special Scientific Interest

DESIGNATED FOR

Monkshood
(*Aconitum angelicum*)

A strong population of highly toxic plant, Monkshood (*Aconitum angelicum*) grows on the banks of the Ely and its tributaries.

This section section of the river is also home to colonies of sand martins and it is a key UK site for overwintering green sandpiper.



The Ely catchment is largely urbanised north of the M4 with large residential and industrial developments having grown here since the demise of the coal mining industry.

South of the M4, the Ely becomes a lowland, meandering river characterised by steep river cliffs, arable and riparian pastoral land. The reach between Miskin and St.Fagans is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

South-east of St. Fagans the river flows through the residential suburbs of Cardiff before entering Cardiff Bay, just inside the barrage (built in 1999) Consequently, the River Ely, no longer has an estuary. Migratory fish species, such as eel, sea trout, salmon and lamprey therefore need to pass through the barrage via the fish pass or lock-gates to access the Ely.

A DENSELY POPULATED CATCHMENT



170,000

people currently live in the Ely catchment

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5%

of the population of Wales

FISH SPECIES

The Ely is host to a range of fish species, including brown trout, pike, perch, roach, chub, carp, eels, grayling and a few sea trout and salmon. Recently, barbel have started to appear in the lower reaches.



NOT IN GOOD HEALTH

The health of our rivers is assessed using a range of ecological and chemical indicators. Under the Water Framework Directive, a river (or waterbody) can be classified as High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad. A High classification means it is close to natural conditions.

The Ely is in poor overall health
Tributary Nant Mychydd is moderate



Historically, the Ely suffered from extremely poor water quality. Despite improvements, the river is still one of the most polluted in Wales.



Pollution from urban development, industry and transport



Historic toxic waste deposited within old quarries (e.g. Broiscin and Maendy). While apparently remediated, there are still concerns about both the on-going and future impact of such sites.