

AFON AFAN

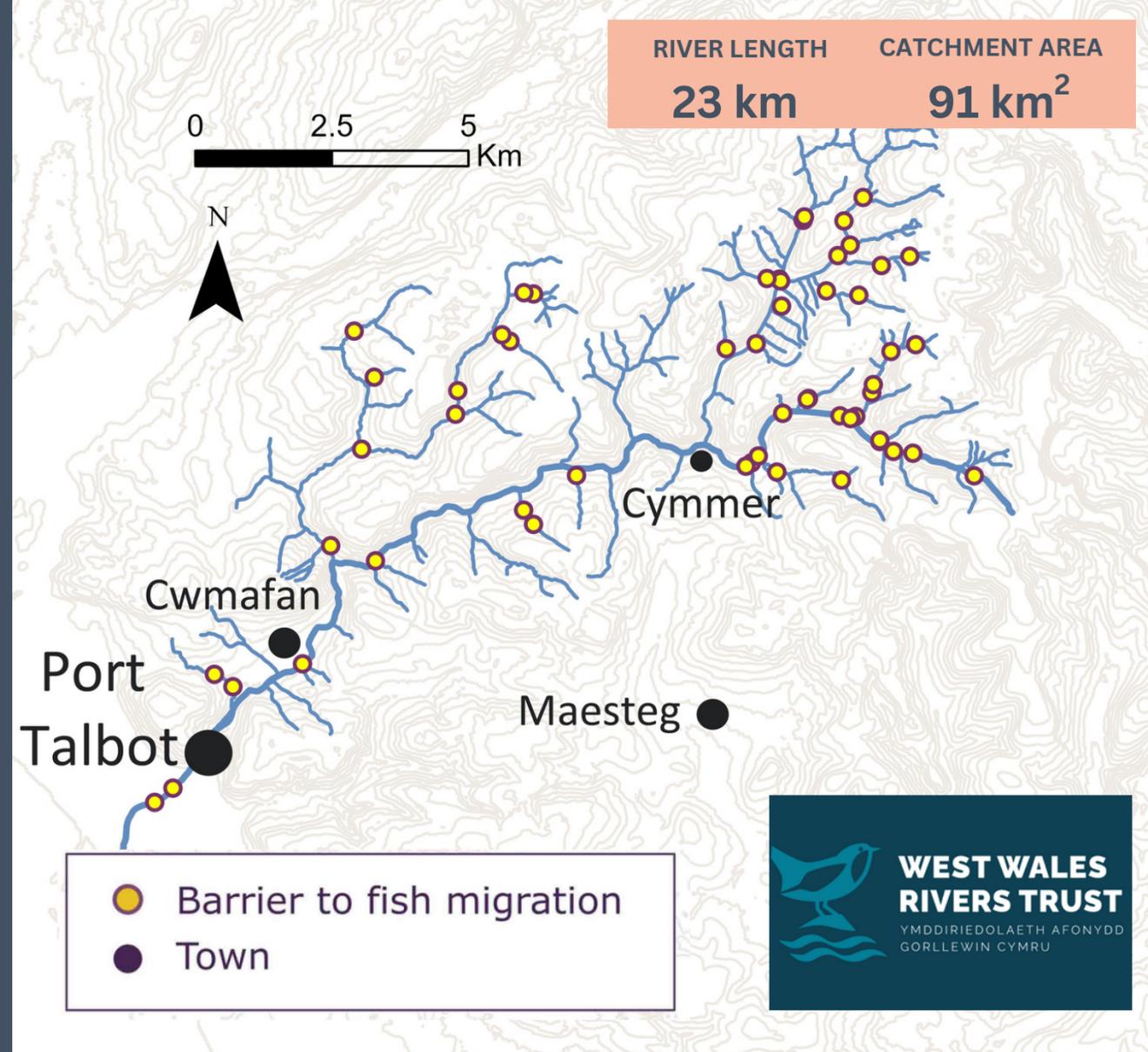
Rising on Mynydd Llangeinwy in Glamorganshire, South Wales, the Afon Afan is a small spate river that flows through a once heavily industrialised valley, passing through the town of Cwmafan and, after approximately 23km, entering Swansea Bay at Port Talbot.

The Afan Valley and its communities were shaped by coal mining, which arrived in the 1860s. Over 40 years from 1860, the populations of the main villages in the valley grew ten-fold to support the major extraction of coal. Coal mining changed the landscape of the valley, supported the development of the railway and polluted the river. Even today, the river still suffers from minewater pollution.

NO DESIGNATIONS

The Afon Afan is one of the few rivers with no designations, nature reserves or protected sites in Wales. Yet, its cultural heritage is vast with over 212 archaeological sites identified within 10km of the river, some dating back to the Roman times.

The once mining valley, following a significant period of water quality improvement and restoration, the Afan Valley is now home to one of the largest (over 130km) mountain bike trails in the Afan Forest.



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 Afan is in good overall health, however, the tributaries of Pelenna and Corrwg are in moderate or poor health.

The Afon Afan is failing significantly for fish, with large numbers of barriers and hydrological (flow) issues.



Pollution from sewage discharges, forestry and urban development. Legacy issues remain with minewater pollution.

The Afan valley, damaged and impacted by the industries it supported (coal, steel and manufacturing) suffered significant deprivation and economic decline. Despite this, the communities of the Valley have shown great social initiatives.

The **Glyncorrwg Ponds** project was the brain-child of a local GP (and political activist) Dr Julian Tudor Hart. He promoted the idea of developing the Corrwg river into a series of off river ponds which could be used for fishing and boating. Uniquely funded by community and co-operative funding, it subsequently gained Welsh Government funding and underpinned the Afan Forest Park today.

Since its inception in 1951, **Afan Valley Angling And Conservation Club** has invested around £100K of its own money restoring the ecological health of the Afan and bringing about the return of salmon and sewin. In 2023, funded by the Nature Networks Fund, the Club, working with Swansea University and West Wales Rivers Trust, delivered important restoration activity to remove barriers to the migratory sewin and salmon now found in the river.

FISH SPECIES

The Afan is recognised as a sewin (or sea trout) river but the 2022 stock assessment shows the population to be at risk for extinction. Draft data for 2023 would also continue to support this decline.

