

AFON IRFON

The River Irfon is a significant sub-catchment of the River Wye, located in Powys, mid-Wales. From its source on the upper slopes of Bryn Garw in the Cambrian mountains, the River Irfon flows south, descending rapidly through the Abergwesyn Valley, past the Nant Irfon Nature Reserve. At Llanwrtyd Wells, the river turns east, eventually converging with the River Wye at Builth Wells.

The Irfon catchment drains 293km² of generally infertile upland landscape dominated by livestock farming and commercial coniferous forestry. Forestry related acidification in the upland reaches has, for many years, affected water and habitat quality.

The Irfon is designated as a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) and forms part of the wider River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is host to several important populations.

SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

to protect designated species and habitats:



White-clawed Crayfish



European Otter



Bullhead



Twaite Shad



Brook & River Lamprey



Atlantic Salmon



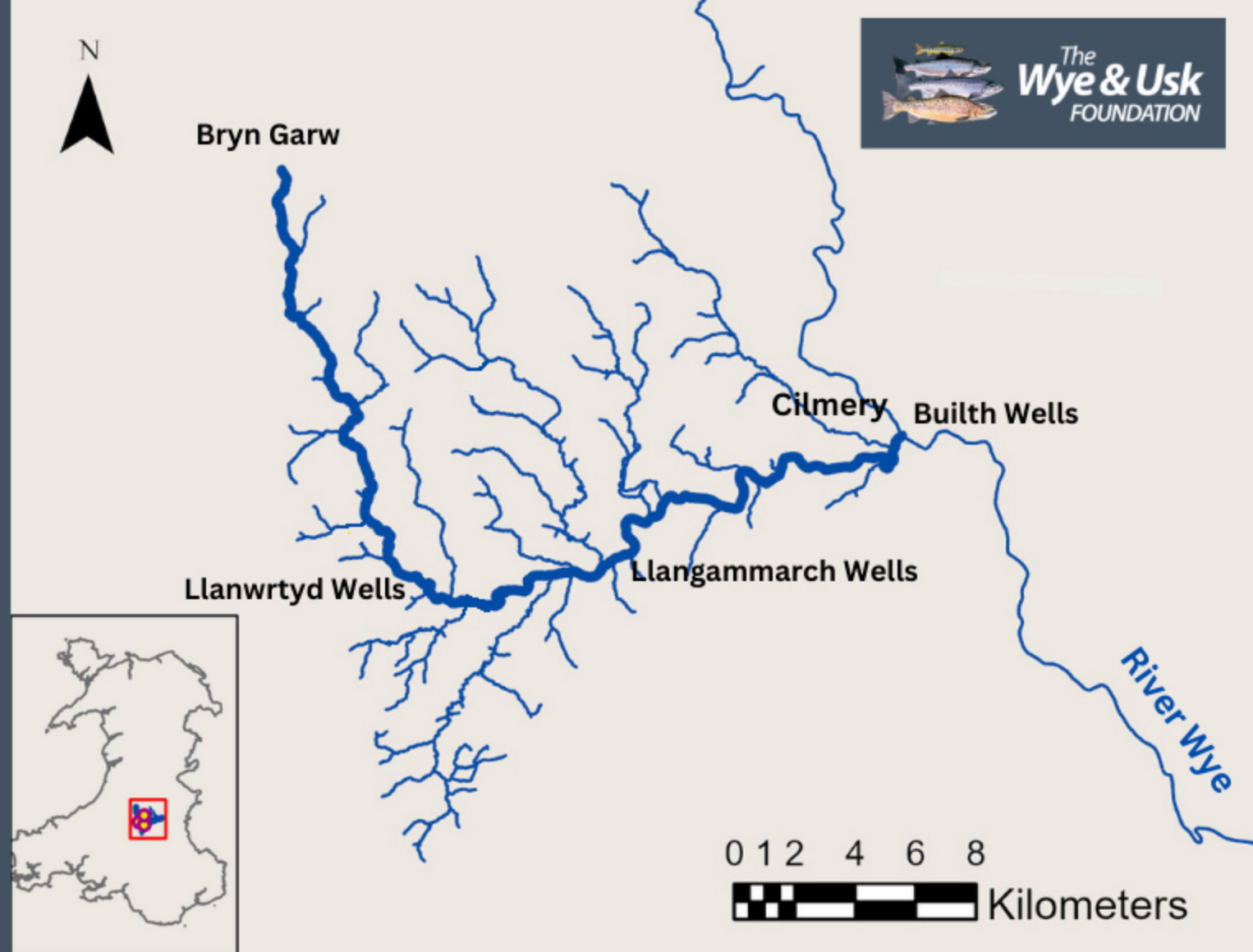
Water-crowfoot



The aim is to achieve a favourable conservation status for these species and habitats, which means that they are able to thrive sustainably. *Currently, none of them are in a favourable status.*



This river Factsheet was compiled by Afonydd Cymru with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.



CATCHMENT AREA

293 km²

LENGTH

45km

RIVER SOURCE

BRYN GARW

RIVER HEALTH

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

- Irfon - source to conf Afon Gwesyn - **Moderate Overall Health**
- Irfon - conf Afon Gwesyn to conf Cleddan - **Moderate Overall Health**
- Irfon - conf Cleddan to conf R Wye - **Good Overall Health**

WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH

Austropotamobius pallipes

The River Irfon is a key habitat for the endangered White-clawed Crayfish. An indicator of healthy, clean rivers, the native White-clawed crayfish plays a significant role in the river ecosystem.

Unfortunately, White-clawed crayfish populations are **in decline**. Numbers have **fallen 50-80%** in recent years due to the introduction of the non-native North American signal crayfish and crayfish plague.

CRAYFISH PLAGUE

In July, 2024, test results confirmed the presence of crayfish plague in the River Irfon, near Builth Wells.

Crayfish plague poses a deadly threat to the native White-clawed Crayfish population.

To reduce the risk of spreading the disease, and to allow the river to be repopulated over time, remember to: **CHECK, CLEAN, DRY**

IDENTIFICATION



SIZE: White clawed crayfish are typically much smaller (6-12cm) than the invasive Signal crayfish (16-18cm).

CLAW COLOUR: The underside of White-clawed crayfish claws are typically pale pinkish-white in colour, while Signal crayfish claws typically feature a red underside.

ACIDIFICATION



Annual liming operations carried out by the Wye and Usk Foundation started in 2003 to correct the long-standing problem of acidity in the River Irfon.

Research has confirmed that the liming work has led to a recovery of the water chemistry, ecology and fisheries of the upper Wye and Irfon.

Head to the WUF website to find out more

