

Our Ref: SW24-039

Robert Jones Parry
Chief Executive Officer
Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru
By email:

5 March 2024

Dear Rob

Aberarth-Carreg Wylan Site of Special Scientific Interest

Thank you for your email received 13 February 2024, outlining your concerns regarding the impacts of coastal recreational activity on the above SSSI. This SSSI is a sizable one at 989ha and extends from the Afon Arth at Aberarth in Ceredigion in the north to Carreg Wylan near Ceibwr Bay in Pembrokeshire to the south.

Although this is a large site, coastal recreation pressures and those associated with coasteering in particular are limited to a few recognised hot spots and the Aberarth-Carreg Wylan SSSI is one of a number of protected sites around the coast of Wales where these pressures are encountered.

Coasteering activity is managed through the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group administered by the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) and there is a single access agreement for commercial coasteering activity providers. In order to operate from a National Trust property like Ceibwr Bay, a provider needs to sign the agreement or concordat which aims to provide and safeguard the sustainable long-term use of sections of the coast for commercial adventurous activities and give guidance to all organized groups on how to conduct activities responsibly.

[Coasteering | Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter \(pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk\)](https://pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk)

We have found this to be an effective way of liaising between the coasteering providers and other stakeholders to ensure best practice is followed which includes minimizing the impacts to wildlife and the local community. The Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group works with coasteering groups across Wales, the National Coasteering Charter, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, the National Trust and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to design best practice guidelines and a code of conduct for all coasteering groups. If any operators are found to be in breach of the code of conduct or not adhering to the requirements of the concordat there are a number of steps that can be taken to address concerns.

2023 was an unprecedented year in terms of the number of issues and complaints about potential or genuine disturbance from coasteering and other coastal recreational activities and this has included Ceibwr Bay. The guidance issued to coasteering operators is reviewed annually and input from stakeholders is accepted and used along with input from

NRW, wider conservation bodies and the activity providers themselves to inform the next years guidance.

In response to the issues we were made aware of, a number of steps have already been taken. We have met with residents and are coordinating a plan with all stakeholders to better manage impacts next year and also expectations as to what can be done. As a result, action has already been taken at various sites in Pembrokeshire including installing signage and increased activity monitoring. PCF are currently seeking funding to review the Pembrokeshire Marine Code and take forward Wild Seas Wales work.

There is a population of breeding Auks along the sea cliffs at Ceibwr and disturbance to sea birds has been raised as a concern. Knowing the use of the site by coasteering providers it is likely that groups spend short periods at this location before they move along the coast so we suspect this is not having an impact on the breeding population. However, we will be putting in place monitoring of the breeding Auks this season to ascertain if this level of disturbance and the way groups behave is detrimental.

This SSSI is important for breeding chough and disturbance to their breeding sites and foraging habitats can be detrimental. Annual survey work shows us that both occupied territories and number of nests known to fledge young are increasing along the Pembrokeshire coast with over 90 sites where adults attempted to breed. Of the nine territories occupied in the Cemaes head to Newport section all but one successfully fledged young in 2023. In terms of the factors affecting the breeding population, disturbance from recreational activities is not thought to be significant on the North Pembrokeshire Coast.

Dolphins and the Grey Seal are monitored nationally and in general the seal population is doing extremely well. However, even without human disturbance pup mortality can be up to 80%.

Last summer, NRW met with the residents, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum and adventure tourism companies to discuss all of their concerns and Grey Seal disturbance was raised. We asked that anyone witnessing disturbance notifies the wildlife crime officers to record the incident and we included this stretch of coastline with others in 'Operation Seabird'; this was a campaign of wildlife crime officer patrols in marked vehicles carrying out visits to recreational hotspots. This was successful in educating visitors but the patrols did not pick up any seal disturbance.

Reports of public wildlife disturbance can be reported to our 24-hour incident reporting line 03000 65 3000 or on our website (link below) and actively occurring incidents should be reported to the police via the non-emergency number 101).

[\[https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/contact-us/report-an-incident/?lang=en\]](https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/contact-us/report-an-incident/?lang=en)

In relation to the concerns to the wider recreational use at the site and the trampling of a rare sea pea plant, although this plant was recorded as present and at risk by the county recorder, we have no record that NRW were informed that it had been recorded. There has been large growth in general visitors and recreational use by the general public in recent

years and the beach is exposed and unprotected from public use and pressure and it is very unfortunate that the species is believed to have been lost. There is likely some wider management required and this has been discussed by the relevant authorities at this site. It is not a feature of the SSSI but we shall contact the county recorder to discuss future actions to further its conservation locally.

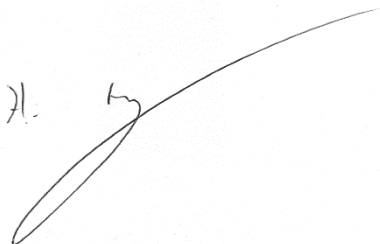
Caffi Ceibwr – NRW are statutory consultees to planning applications which have the potential to impact on the features of a protected site and when the local planning authority consult us, we shall look at the application and provide a response in line with our development planning consultation service:

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/our-role-in-planning-and-development/our-role-in-planning-and-development/?lang=en>

We will consider the impacts of the recreational use of the coast when doing so, if appropriate.

I hope this addresses the issues and questions you raise, but should you require any further information we would be happy to further advise.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Manley', written over a faint, light blue circular stamp or watermark.

Huwel Manley
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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi.
Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.