

## In Depth – Protected Sites

As a means of safeguarding and protecting biodiversity, sites deemed to be important internationally, nationally and / or locally for their habitats and species have been designated under the auspices of a variety of wildlife legislation.

The following is a summary of the different types of protected sites and the implications of designation. Further information on these sites and a full list of UK sites can be viewed on the JNCC website: [www.jncc.defra.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk). Maps and further documentation relating to those occurring in Wales can be found on the Countryside Council for Wales website: [www.ccw.gov.uk](http://www.ccw.gov.uk).

Below you can download maps of Denbighshire showing our internationally, nationally and locally important sites.

### 1. International Sites

#### Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

Sites designated for their importance in a European context under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of this Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitats and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II. They are those considered to be in the most need of conservation throughout the European Union. Many are also designated as SSSIs (see below) but may differ regarding boundaries or the features they are designated for.

The Welsh Government, through the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), is responsible for ensuring that SACs achieve and remain in a favourable condition.

In, or partly within, Denbighshire there are six SACs:

- Alyn Valley Woods
- Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains
- Dee Estuary
- Elwy Valley Woods
- Llwyn
- River Dee and Bala Lake.



*The River Dee at Carrog – part of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC*

#### Special Protection Areas for birds (SPAs)

Sites designated specifically to conserve wild birds that are listed as rare and vulnerable in Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive. They include sites important to migratory birds as well as residents. Together with SACs they form a network known as Natura 2000 sites and similarly to SACs, they tend to also be SSSIs.

In, or partly within, Denbighshire there are three SPAs:

- Berwyn
- Liverpool Bay
- The Dee Estuary

## Ramsar Sites

Wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention and guided by criteria set out in the convention. In the UK the emphasis has been on selecting sites of importance to waterbirds so consequently many Ramsar sites are also SPAs. However, wetlands are key to the survival of many other plants and animals and Ramsar sites are not exclusively designated for birds.

Wetland sites can be areas of fen, marsh, peatland or water and they can be natural or artificial, permanent or temporary. Again, most of these sites are also designated SSSI.

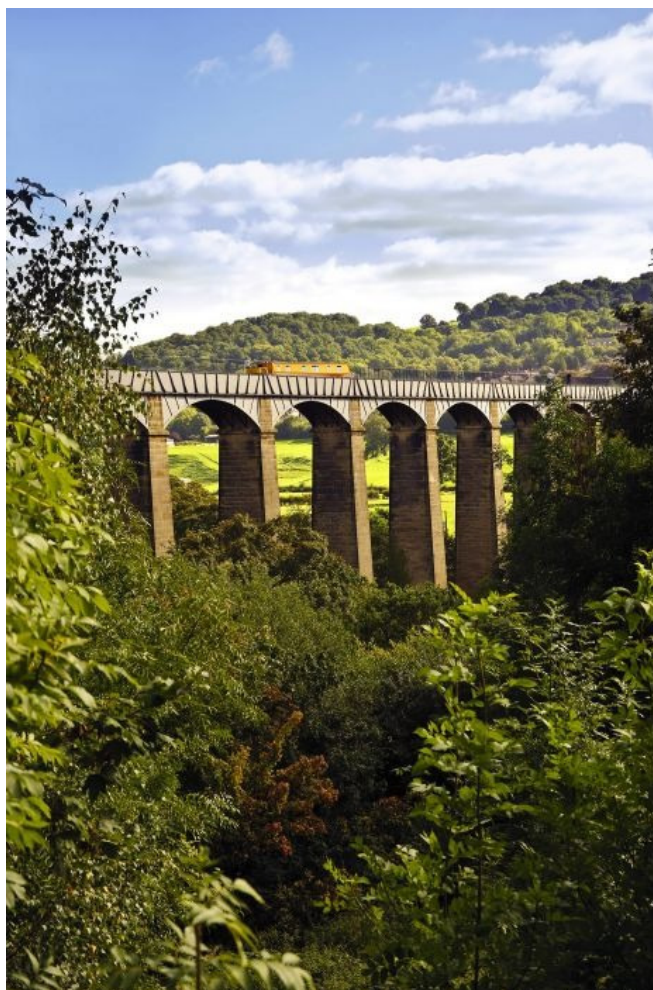
There is one Ramsar site partly within Denbighshire:

- The Dee Estuary

## World Heritage Sites

Designated to meet the UK's commitments under the World Heritage Convention, these are sites globally important for their cultural or natural heritage interest and require appropriate management and protection measures.

In Denbighshire we have one World Heritage Site – the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal – which extends into neighbouring Wrexham and Shropshire. Whilst this is designated for its civil engineering heritage, the site is within an area important for biodiversity and actions exist within its management plan to protect and enhance the wildlife found here. For more information visit: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1303>.



*Pontcysyllte Aqueduct – part of the World Heritage Site*

## 2. National Sites

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

The key sites for the conservation of wildlife and geological features in the UK. They were first designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with amendments to their protection made through the subsequent Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Biological SSSIs represent the best examples of specific habitats within an area, a key population of a rare species and / or an unusual or otherwise important area for wildlife. They can be designated for just one or a suite of features. Geological SSSIs represent either geological formations typical to the region that are exposed, or some key geological feature of interest.

In Wales, the CCW identifies these areas and is responsible for ensuring they are in favourable condition, though SSSIs can be designated on private as well as public land. Protection of SSSIs is achieved through prohibiting damaging operations, unless permission has been granted by CCW, and through the provision of management agreements.

There are 29 SSSIs wholly or partly within Denbighshire:

- Berwyn
- Bryn Alyn
- Caeau Pen y Coed
- Cefn Rofft
- Chwarel Pant Glas
- Cil-y-Groeslwyd Woods, Eyarth Woods and Rocks and Craigddwy-wynt
- Clogau Quarry
- Coed Nant Mawr
- Coedydd ac Ogofau Elwy a Meirchion
- Coedydd Dyffryn Alwen
- Crest Mawr Wood
- Cynwyd Forest Quarry
- Dee Estuary
- Dinas Bran
- Ffynnon Bueno and Cae Gwyn Caves



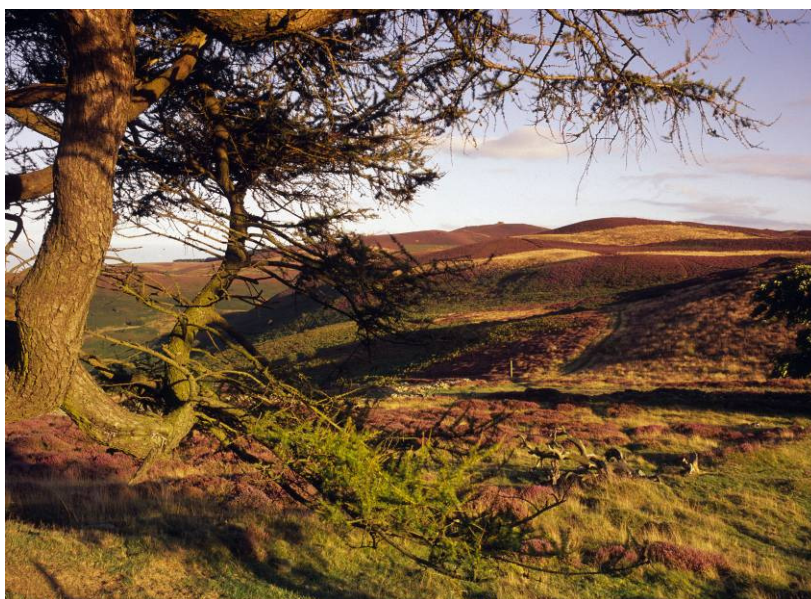
*Limestone cliffs, part of Bryn Alyn SSSI (David Quinn)*

- Graig Fawr
- Graig Quarry
- Graig, Llanarmon-yn-Ial
- Gronant Dunes and Talacre Warren
- Hendre Bach
- Llandegla Moor
- Llwyn
- Maes Hiraddug
- Moel Hiraddug Quarries
- Mwyngloddfa Pennant
- Mynydd Hiraethog
- Penarth Quarry
- Prestatyn Hillside
- Ruabon / Llantysilio Mountains and Minera



## Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)

Protected by law because of their special landscape qualities, they have more protection than other areas under the planning process and, in terms of landscape and scenery, are equal to National Parks. They are dynamic, working landscapes supporting vibrant communities and as most of the areas are in private ownership, creating successful partnerships to ensure sympathetic land management is key to their management. All AONBs are required to produce a management plan through consultation with local communities, organisations and public bodies. Developments inside AONBs are more tightly controlled through the planning process to ensure they do not adversely affect the landscape and special funding is often available for projects inside the AONB that support their special features.



*Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.*

One AONB occurs within Denbighshire and neighbouring Flintshire and Wrexham – The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley – designated in 1985 and extended in 2012. For more information on this area, visit: [www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk](http://www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk).

## National Parks

Large areas designated by law to conserve and enhance their special landscape qualities whilst promoting public enjoyment of them and having regard for the social and economic well being of those living within them. They have their own Authorities which control development.

## National Nature Reserves

The best national examples of habitats, geology, wildlife or a combination of all three. They are owned or leased in Wales by CCW or other conservation bodies and many can be visited.

There are two National Nature Reserves partly within Denbighshire:

- Y Berwyn
- Hafod Elwy Moor

### 3. Local

#### County Wildlife Sites

Designated by Local Authorities as being of local conservation importance, they are non-statutory but account is taken of them within the planning and development control process.

There are 248 designated County Wildlife Sites in Denbighshire.

#### Local Nature Reserves

Set up by Local Authorities after consultation with the relevant statutory nature conservation agency, they have features which are important locally and combine conservation with opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of nature. They help to protect habitats and species and forge partnerships between the local authority, nature conservation organisations and the community.

Denbighshire County Council has designated four Local Nature Reserves, all of which are managed by the Countryside Service. They are:

- Moel Findeg
- Gronant Dunes
- Brickfields Pond
- Rhuddlan Pond

A fifth – Prestatyn Hillside – is in the process of being designated.



*Moel Findeg Local Nature Reserve (Moirá Young)*

#### Country Parks

Statutorily declared and managed by Local Authorities, they are primarily intended for recreation and leisure opportunities close to population centres. They do not necessarily have any nature conservation importance, but there is often overlap and this is the case for Denbighshire where the two country parks – Loggerheads and Moel Famau – contain important habitats, the former being part of the wider Alyn Valley Woods SAC.

## **Limestone Pavement Orders**

Afford statutory protection for limestone pavements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Created by the relevant local government authority, an order prohibits the removal or damage of limestone within the designated area. Limestone pavements are recognised as a priority habitat for nature conservation in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive.

## **Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)**

The most important places for geology and geomorphology outside of statutorily protected land. Selected under locally developed criteria according to their value for education, scientific study, historical significance or aesthetic qualities. They are equivalent to County Wildlife Sites and consideration of their importance is taken into account within the planning and development control process.

There are 62 RIGS sites wholly or partly within Denbighshire. To find out about RIGS sites within North East Wales visit: [www.newrigs.org](http://www.newrigs.org).