

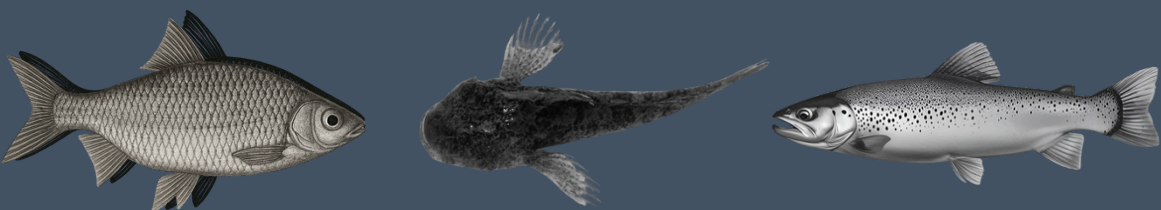
# AFON GWENFRO

The River Gwenfro is a small tributary river located in North East Wales. Rising from the springs of the Clywydian Range among limestone outcrops near Bwlchgwyn, the River Gwenfro flows southeastward through the villages of Southsea and New Broughton, eventually merging with the River Clywedog - an important tributary of the SAC designated River Dee - near Wrexham.

Early in its course, the river flows through a deep valley of farmland and woodland. Once at Wrexham, the river becomes highly modified and largely culverted. It is hard to catch sight of the river in Wrexham, with much of its course hidden beneath the city!

Although the River Gwenfro itself lacks official designations, its waters eventually flow into the River Dee, a renowned Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Dee is host to several Annex II species, including freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic Salmon and Otter.

## FISH SPECIES



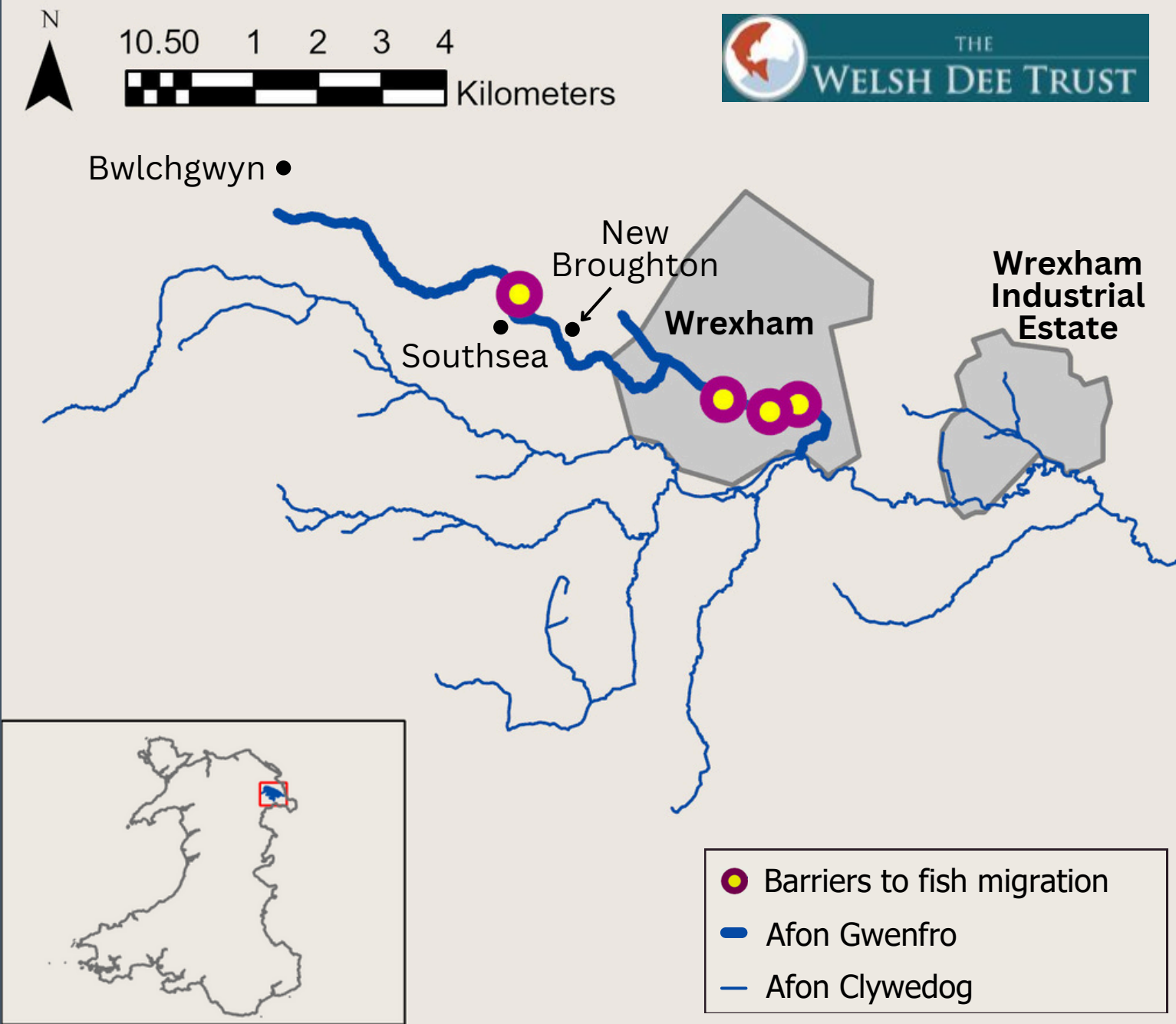
ROACH

BULLHEAD

BROWN TROUT



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



| CATCHMENT AREA     | LENGTH | RIVER SOURCE |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|
| 29 km <sup>2</sup> | 13 km  | Bwlchgwyn    |

## 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.

- The River Gwenfro is in **moderate overall health** and **moderate ecological health**

However

- The fish population is classified as **high**

## AN INDUSTRIAL PAST

The Gwenfro reflects both the challenges and opportunities of urban rivers.

Historically, the river was of great significance for Wrexham's burgeoning industrial landscape. The river's flows and reliable water supply were harnessed to power local corn mills, tanneries and ironworks.

Home to the UK's first brewery, beer was Wrexham's chief export, with breweries finding great success along the banks of the of the Gwenfro.

It is a common misconception, that these breweries utilized the river for brewing beer. In reality, the sands and gravels around Wrexham served as a natural filtration system for the groundwater below. It was these mineral-rich, subterranean waters that the brewers used for brewing, not the River Gwenfro!

## POLLUTION

Unfortunately, the same industries which flourished with the opportunities provided by these waters, were a major source of its pollution. By the late 18th century, the waters of the Gwenfro were considered hazardous for human health!

The Gwenfro continues to suffer from pollution to this day, with frequent pollution incidents caused by accidental releases of polluting substances from nearby industrial premises, as well as misconconnections into the surface water drainage system.

## RIVER GWENFRO TOGETHER PROJECT

### Get Involved!

A collaborative effort is underway to revive the River Gwenfro. The community-led project, facilitated by the Welsh Dee Trust and Groundwork North Wales, will bring together local residents, decision makers and businesses to develop an action plan to identify and address the many challenges facing the river. The aim is to create a healthier river for both people and wildlife!

Head to the Welsh Dee Trust website to find out more [↗](#)