

TRAETH PENSARN SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

YOUR SPECIAL SITE AND ITS FUTURE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT



CCGC John Osley / CCW John Osley

YOUR SPECIAL SITE AND ITS FUTURE

‘Your Special Site and its Future’ is part of our commitment to improve the way we work with Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) owners and occupiers. In it, we explain what is special about the wildlife on your site, and what care is needed to look after its wildlife into the future.

All SSSIs are considered to be of national importance and we recognise the crucial role that owners and occupiers play in their management and protection. We need you to share your views and knowledge of this site with us, to help safeguard it.

We hope that you will find ‘Your Special Site and its Future’ interesting and helpful. Please contact us if there is anything about the site and its management that you would like to discuss.

What is ‘special’ about the wildlife at Traeth Pensarn SSSI?

Traeth Pensarn has one special feature; this is:

- **The coastal vegetated shingle beach.**

Vegetated shingle beaches are relatively rare habitats. Traeth Pensarn represents more than 10% of the total area of this habitat in Wales.

A vegetated shingle beach is composed of a mixture of plant communities. Some species are typical of the ‘pioneer’ community while others are more typical of the ‘stabilised’ community.

Pioneer community and conditions:

At Traeth Pensarn the pioneer plants found near the seaward ridge of the shingle are faced with a number of environmental factors, which make the shingle ridge a relatively severe place to inhabit. These include extreme drought conditions due to the relative porosity of the shingle, movement of the shingle during storm conditions, salt spray from the sea and occasional inundation by seawater. Due to the relatively severe growing conditions found there, the pebbles are sparsely colonised by vegetation. Special adaptations to the severe conditions include leaves with thick waxy cuticles, folded leaves or spines to resist drought and fleshy leaves to aid water retention. Some species send down long ‘tap’ roots to find fresh water and nutrients, which also helps to stabilise the shingle beach.

Due to the lack of nutrients and fresh water in the porous shingle, an important source of nutrients and humus is the decaying seaweed in the strandline.

Stabilised community and conditions:

Towards the back of the beach in areas where fine sediments are trapped within the larger shingle cobbles, a more ‘stabilised’ community exists. Whilst nutrient and water availability are still relatively limited, the movement of shingle and overtopping by tides is largely removed there. Colonisation by vegetation is more luxuriant. Specialised plant species found here reflect the greater relative stability in the shingle, but still contain species either adapted to the coastal location or the limestone substrate of the site.

What do we want Traeth Pensarn to look like?

The following is a description of how we would like to see the features at Traeth Pensarn.

The natural coastal processes of wave and tidal movement of limestone cobbles and mixed sand along the beach will take place. This will maintain a dynamic shingle beach, which does not suffer from net erosion.

The frontal ridge of the beach, although sparsely vegetated, should in summer display the brightly coloured flowers and succulent leaves of plants such as sea kale, yellow horned-poppy, sea holly and curled dock. These areas of ‘pioneer’ vegetated shingle should continue to make up at least 40% of the area of the vegetated beach.



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A more densely colonised region of 'stabilised shingle', characterised by species such as common restharrow, red fescue, lady's bedstraw and sea radish, should be present on the top of the beach. These species will always be present in spring and summer months, but will not make up more than 50% of the area of the vegetated shingle.

What management is needed on Traeth Pensarn SSSI and why?

Although Traeth Pensarn is an excellent place for wildlife it will only remain so if the necessary management continues. CCW's priority is to work with you to ensure that this management is carried out.

What does this mean in practice?

There are a number of different factors that could damage the special features at Traeth Pensarn if they are not properly managed. The most important of these are as follows:

Natural coastal processes:

The shingle ridge at Traeth Pensarn is derived predominantly from the erosion of limestone material to the west, which has been transported alongshore by the natural processes of the tides and waves. To maintain the shingle beach in a healthy dynamic state, natural replenishment of this material will be encouraged and where possible enhanced, letting beach processes continue with minimal human interference.

Visitor Pressure:

Vegetation on shingle beaches is very sensitive to disruption and trampling. For instance, previously car parking was permitted across the whole of the SSSI area, the effect of which was to create large un-vegetated track-ways. The vegetation will take several more years to recover from this. The initiative by the Local Authority to remove vehicles from the shoreline at Traeth Pensarn has alleviated this problem and will need to be maintained in order to improve conditions for these sensitive plant communities.

Invasive species:

Small areas peripheral to the site have suffered from dumping of materials, which has led to a localised increase of nutrients. Similarly, dog fouling increases nutrient input throughout the shingle site. This in turn leads to the increase of invasive plant species at the expense of the specialised shingle species. To avoid a further increase of invasive species, CCW will work with landowners and promote interpretation material that gives visitors a greater understanding of how sensitive the species of the site are to human activities.

Beach Cleaning:

Cleaning of the beach should be confined to the removal of plastic and other inorganic litter by handpicking.

Finally

Our knowledge and understanding of wildlife is continually improving. It is possible that new issues may arise in the future, whilst other issues may disappear. This statement is written with the best information we have now, but may have to change in the future as our understanding improves. Any information you can provide on the wildlife of your site, its management and its conservation would be much appreciated.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your SSSI, or have any concerns about your SSSI, please contact your local CCW office.

Your local office is:

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