

An Educational Guide for Outdoor Recreation Providers



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In producing this guide, Snowdonia-Active has consulted widely with both conservation organisations such as the RSPB, National Trust, North Wales Seal Research Organisation and Natural Resources Wales, as well as local and national recreational groups and individuals, such as the National Coasteering Charter, Canoe Wales and the British Mountaineering Council, as well as a myriad of local outdoor providers.

It is not intended to be a “definitive” instructional guide, but its function is to provide education and guidance to providers of outdoor recreation activities on how to minimise environmental, social and cultural impacts of their activities while providing educational and practical information to enhance their knowledge to pass on to participants. It also briefly explains the legal status of the landscape, access rights and responsibilities, and the environmental and historic designations that apply to this unique landscape and the protected habitats and species it contains.

The contents should be read in conjunction with the [Isle of Anglesey Marine Code](#)



Snowdonia-Active has a long history of delivering projects which aim to reconcile conservation and recreation. In 2012 Snowdonia-Active formalised this approach and launched the Environmental Charter North Wales. The Environmental Charter defines good practice for responsible recreation and promotes the sustainable use of the landscape for recreation and leisure activities. Under the banner of the Environmental Charter, Snowdonia-Active creates resources, runs training and delivers consultancy projects which help sustainably grow the outdoor sector in Wales.



Ynys Cybi

Introduction

Ynys Cybi /Holy Island – a guide for outdoor recreation providers is a good practice education and environmental guide for outdoor providers operating on Ynys Cybi (Holy Island) off the Isle of Anglesey.

This guide came about as a result of a large increase in recreational users (especially provider-led groups) along some sections of the coast and Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain) and the opportunity given by the creation of the Ynys Cybi Landscape Partnership. The Partnership is made up of over 40 local and national groups and its vision is to create a programme of projects and activities designed to bring around some of the changes necessary to achieve the Partnership's long-term vision for the island:

The Ynys Cybi Landscape Partnership Vision: -

“A vibrant island community, fully aware of the role that the distinctive landscape of Holy Island plays in supporting local jobs and recreational activities, and enhancing our general health and wellbeing.

“Local people working together to protect and manage our island's rich heritage, supporting a thriving community and giving visitors a special welcome for generations to come.”





Ynys Cybi

Holy Island, Anglesey

Ynys Cybi is an island of about 40 square km, located on the western side of the larger Isle of Anglesey, Wales, from which it is separated from the main island by the Cymyran Strait, but connected to it by three separate road bridges and the main railway line. “Cybi” was a sixth-century saint, who founded Caergybi (Cybi’s Fort, Holyhead). It is thought to be called “Holy” island in English, due to the high concentration of standing stones, burial chambers, and other religious sites on the island. It is part of the Isle of Anglesey County Council and is located within the Isle of Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The whole landscape, especially the coast and Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain) is an amazing and wonderful area, containing spectacular scenery, and some incredible wildlife, including internationally rare and scarce species, much of which is freely and publicly accessible. Some of our activities can have a negative impact on this area and its wildlife, but with prior planning and some careful consideration of the special interests here, most informal recreational activities can be carried out with minimal impact on the environment. Despite the presence of many rare and protected habitats and species, most happily co-exists with recreational activities along this coastline, with only minimal, usually seasonally imposed restrictions required.

Most but not all, of the recreational interest, is located along the west and northern coasts and on Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain). This includes world-class sea-cliff rock climbing venues, internationally important sea-kayaking locations, and popular coasteering venues, and the whole island is also encircled by the Wales Coast Path.

While this guide focuses on the most well-used areas on the west coast of the island, with site-specific details for the most popular areas, much of the guidance applies to the whole area, as fragile habitats, nationally scarce nesting birds, breeding seals and a wealth of other important conservation features are found all over Ynys Cybi.

Landscape designations

Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Isle of Anglesey's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers much of the coastal zone of Anglesey was designated in 1966. It was designated in order to protect the aesthetic appeal and variety of the island's coastal landscape and habitats from inappropriate development. An AONB is a legally designated status that gives protection under planning law and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, and is similar to the protection given to National Parks.

Special Protection Areas

Special Protection Areas are designated because of rare or migratory birds and their habitats in Wales and are areas that have been designated specifically to conserve wild birds that are listed as rare and vulnerable in the Birds Directive. They also include the sites in Wales that migratory birds use as stop-off points on their journeys across the planet. Parts of the coast of Ynys Cybi, extending from Rhoscolyn to the Breakwater Country Park have this designation, which is the highest nature conservation designation for the protection of birds in the UK.

Special Areas of Conservation

Designated for a wide range of habitats and species other than birds, the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) have been chosen to make a significant contribution to conserving habitats and wildlife species that live there, that are named in the EC Habitats Directive, including rare flora or fauna. Much of the west coast of Ynys Cybi is also designated as a SAC.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

SSSIs are the most important sites for Wales' natural heritage, legally protected to safeguard the quality and variety of habitats, species and geological features. Every SSSI has a "citation", a legal document that describes the protected features within that SSSI. The citation lists "operations likely to damage the special interest". It is a criminal offence for anyone (including the land owner) to carry out any of these listed activities without prior consent from Natural Resources Wales. This includes any recreational activity that could damage or disturb the features, habitats or species found within the SSSI.

Ynys Cybi

Nature, key species & habitats

Geology and the ground beneath

Ynys Cybi is part of the Ynys Môn Geopark designated for its geological significance. Geologists believe that the oldest rocks on Ynys Môn are about 1.2 billion years old!

The rocks that make up the cliffs of Ynys Lawd and most of the west coast of Ynys Cybi including Penrhyn Mawr and Porth Dafarch are part of the Mona complex of Cambrian age, about 600 million years old. The unique rock formations of twisted, layered and photogenic rock are unlike any other climbing area in the UK. The rocks themselves are mainly made up of quartzite, a hard white metamorphic rock, that would have started off, hundreds of millions of years ago as a thick layer of sand on the ocean floor.

Also found here is a rock known as green schist, a banded and intensely folded metamorphic rock, squeezed and shaped into spectacular folds that are visible on the cliff faces, by huge movements in the earth's surface many millions of years ago, and which again started off as muds and silts on a deep ocean floor.

Much more information on the geology of the area and some excellent downloadable, self-guided geological trails are available on the Ynys Môn Geopark websites - <https://www.geomon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/scan0002.pdf>.



Photo credit: John Conway

green schist

Birds

All nesting birds in the UK are protected by law – it is an offence to damage, disturb or destroy the nest of any nesting bird.

Some bird species that are found on Ynys Cybi have additional protection due to their rarity or conservation status. We are really fortunate and privileged to be able to see these species and carry out our recreational activities in the habitats that sustain these birds. To protect these rare species, some recreational activities need to be restricted at key sites at certain times of the year (usually during the nesting season from March to the end of July).

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Some of the key bird species seen on the sea and inland cliffs of Ynys Cybi are described below, but of course, there are many other birds to be seen that are also protected, such as the iconic puffin, cormorant, shag, and rock pipit. Inland on the coastal heaths, equally important but possibly less obvious bird species, such as kestrel, buzzard, stonechat, linnet, meadow pipit, wheatear, and many other smaller birds also rely on minimal disturbance to survive.



These remarkable birds have been recorded at speeds in excess of 200 mph during their aerial dives, or stoops, which they perform when stalking their prey.

Peregrines were at a low point in the 1960s due to human persecution and the impact of pesticides in the food chain. Improved legislation and protection have helped the birds to recover and they have now expanded into many urban areas. However, they are still persecuted - birds are illegally killed to prevent predation on game birds and racing pigeons. Population numbers on natural sites continue to be declining. They also have eggs and chicks taken for collections and falconry. The birds usually pair up for life and are very territorial, returning to the same nest, or very close by each year. They frequently nest on ledges under overhangs, often in abandoned raven nests. There are probably no more than half a dozen pairs of peregrines on Ynys Cybi.

..... peregrine falcon

chough

The chough (pronounced 'chuff') has a red bill and legs unlike any other member of the crow family.

This Schedule 1 protected species can be found in flocks in autumn and winter. It nests in deep crevices or holes on rock-faces and sea caves. They primarily feed on invertebrates found on grassland and heathland. A very rare British bird with less than 240 pairs in Wales.

Indicator signs of disturbance involve the feeding bird initially "hopping" away from people, followed by short flights and then taking flight and flying around making agitated sounds. Nest building starts in early March, while eggs are normally laid in early April. The eggs hatch about three weeks later. This is a particularly sensitive and critical time. Disturbance at this time will mean the eggs will chill in less than 20 mins, and the development of chicks inside will stop. Disturbance during feeding (including the gathering of people on the cliff top) will prevent the adult from returning with food, often obvious by the adult bird flying around in circles close to the nest site, and again resulting in poor development and potentially death of the chicks.



guillemot & razorbill

They come to land only to nest, spending the rest of their life at sea.

They nest by laying a single egg on sloping rocky ledges, and nest together in impressive colonies of hundreds, if not many thousands of birds. The cliffs of South Stack are among the most important sites for these species in Southern Britain.

Disturbance, by climbers, or from the sea, can be catastrophic to the whole colony, as when disturbed, the whole colony can panic and fly off, dislodging eggs and young off the ledges. It is thought that each pair only produce a single viable egg that lives to become a mature bird only every five or six years. The birds will often feed in large rafts out at sea but close to the nesting areas. It's important that kayakers and other recreational marine users keep at least 100m away from such rafts and away from nesting sites.



herring gulls

Kittiwakes are gentle-looking, medium-sized gulls with a small yellow bill and a dark eye.

In flight, the black wing-tips show no white, unlike other gulls, and look as if they have been 'dipped in ink'. After breeding the birds move out into the Atlantic where they spend the winter. In the last few years, population numbers have declined almost catastrophically, almost certainly due to climate change, as warmer seas mean the sand-eels are deeper and kittiwakes are unable to dive as deep as other species. Globally, the species is thought to have declined by around 40% since the 1970s.



These birds, often described as the so-called "seagulls", are given bad press due to their scavenging activities close to urban areas.

Silver-grey back, white head, neck and underparts; black wing tips with white spots or patches; heavy-looking bill with a red spot on the underside; flesh-coloured legs. They are now classified in the UK as Red under the Birds of Conservation Concern and listed in the Red List for Priority Species for conservation in the UK.

Fun fact: Herring gulls prefer drinking freshwater, but they'll drink seawater when they must. Special glands located over the eyes allow them to excrete the salt that would otherwise dehydrate most animals, including us.

Puffins only make Anglesey their home for a few months a year (April - July).

Puffins lay only a single egg, in late April or early May. Both parents incubate it, and share the feeding duties. The timing of the breeding in puffin colonies is highly synchronised, and so the departure of all adults takes place within a few days. Puffins usually reach breeding age at 5-6 years old, and often live for 20 years.



kittiwakes

puffin

atlantic grey seal

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Grey seals spend most of their time out at sea feeding on fish. They return to land to rest and can often be seen 'hauled out', lying on British beaches.

Grey seals give birth to fluffy white pups in the autumn. These pups stay on land until they have lost their white coats and trebled their body weight. At this time the pups cannot survive by themselves, are not strong enough and do not have enough body fat to stay warm and will quickly die if disturbed.

Seals use many of the beaches and coves on Ynys Cybi for pupping, and it's vital that these areas are avoided during the pupping season, usually late August to mid-November. When seals are looking at people, their flight or fight response mode is high and if they start moving from their resting position, it's a sign it's been disturbed. If it starts making for the water, it is fleeing and panicking and can easily be injured. This is a clear sign that people are too close and need to move away immediately. If this happens when seals are pupping, there is a good chance the pup will either be abandoned or try to follow its mother into the sea, both of which will lead to the pup dying. Kayakers and other recreational marine users need to avoid beaches used by seals from mid-August until mid - November and try to maintain at least 100m distance from any seals at this time. Climbers and coastering groups should carefully check each bay or cove before committing to abseil or traverse into these coves and avoid going to these areas when seals are present.

Flora

There are some very rare flowers and plants found on the cliffs and heathland of Ynys Cybi, some of which are unique (endemic) to the locality and not found anywhere else in the world.

South Stack fleawort

This flower is unique to Ynys Cybi, and its only known site anywhere in the world is on the cliffs of South Stack.

It is a subspecies of the field fleawort. It is a single-stemmed plant, typically with more than six yellow flower heads, which flowers between May and July. It's found in a few areas along the very edge of the cliffs around Penrhyn Mawr (The Range) and in order to protect it, climbers have agreed not to place any additional belay stakes along the cliff tops where it grows. It is also important that groups do not congregate or have equipment dumps where the plant grows as trampling is a significant threat.



Spotted rock-rose

A flower of the west coast of the UK, the largest colonies of spotted rock-rose lie on Ynys Cybi.

Its distinct crimson-spotted flowers are matched by red-flushed leaves. It is the official county flower of Ynys Môn and is found on only a handful of colonies on islands off the west coast of the UK. Its habitat is dry, rocky places and the best time to see it is when it flowers from June to August. To see the spotted rock-rose in full bloom you have to catch it at just the right time. It flowers only once during its lifetime and sheds its vivid petals within hours of doing so.



Most of the area above the cliffs is protected lowland or maritime heath, and Ynys Cybi contains the largest continuous areas of coastal heath on Ynys Môn.

This includes all the main species of heather, gorse, and even some juniper around South Stack itself and parts of Holyhead Mountain.

In early spring large swathes of spring squill can be seen on the more open ground while on the cliffs themselves an array of coastal plants, including thrift, kidney vetch, greater stitchwort, lousewort, sea campion and seaside centaury.

Do not take shortcuts across the heathland (which can also disturb ground and shrub nesting birds) and do not to create new approach paths to the cliffs.



Access



Public Rights of Way – The public has a right to pass and repass only on foot at all times. It is an offence for a landowner to obstruct a public highway and any such obstructions should be reported to the Isle of Anglesey County Council Rights of Way team. The right to use a public footpath is limited to the exact line of the path and users have no right to deviate from the line of the path. For example, just because a public path leads across the top or the base of a cliff, it does not give a right to climb on that cliff.



Parts of Ynys Cybi are mapped as **“open access land”** under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, (The CROW Act). This gives the public a right of access on foot for the purpose of open-air recreation, to land that is mapped as open access, subject to some legally enforceable general restrictions. Under the CROW Act the public are not allowed to carry out certain activities including (but exclusively) damaging boundary structures, fires, intentionally disturbing wildlife or damaging vegetation, use of a metal detector, placing notices, and causing obstruction to other lawful use of the land.

It is also not permitted to hold organised games, to camp or carry out any activity which is organised for commercial purposes without the permission of the land owner.

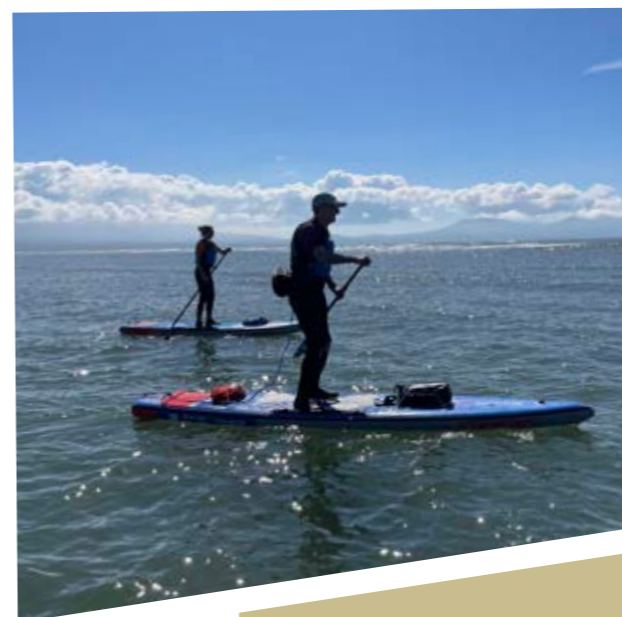
Ynys Cybi

Key recreational activities



Rock-climbing: The cliffs of Ynys Cybi, especially the cliffs surrounding Gogarth Bay, Rhoscolyn and Ynys Lawd (South Stack) are among the best sea-cliff climbing locations in the world.

There are long-established agreements in place between The British Mountaineering Council (BMC), key land owners and conservation bodies. All the agreed restrictions and guidance can be found in the most recent climbing guidebooks produced by Ground Up Publications (Gogarth North and Gogarth South) and also the most up-to-date access information is on the BMC's Regional Access Database.



Stand up paddle boarding:

Apart from a few sheltered coves and bays, such as the Inland Sea, Borthwen, Trearddur Bay and Porth Dafarch, the extreme tidal races that are frequently present off the west coast of Ynys Cybi, means the waters off the west coast of Ynys Cybi are extremely challenging for paddle-boarders and unsuitable for the inexperienced. The advice given to sea-kayakers on how to avoid disturbing wildlife apply equally to paddle-boarding and all other water-based activities.



Coasteering/sea-level traversing: Most coasteering is carried out by instructor-led groups.

This gives an excellent opportunity to teach and educate groups about the local environment and culture. The National Coasteering Charter gives a wider overview of the activity and oversees competence awards for guides and instructors as well as producing best practice guidelines. Many providers are also signed up to and are part of the WiSE Scheme, the UK's national training scheme for minimising disturbance to marine wildlife.

Some coasteering activities venture onto cliffs where there are agreed seasonal restrictions for rock-climbing activities, mainly due to nesting birds. These agreements and restrictions also apply to all recreational and group activities. The most up-to-date source of information for these agreements tends to be the British Mountaineering Council's Regional Access Database.



Sea-kayaking: The sea off Ynys Cybi gives some of the most exciting and challenging sea-kayaking coastal trips and experienced kayakers from all over the world travel to Ynys Cybi to experience the adventure to be enjoyed here.

The tidal races off Penrhyn Mawr, Rhoscolyn Point and North Stack are well-known challenges to sea kayakers. While most sea-kayaking is unlikely to have a significant impact on wildlife, paddlers are asked to avoid the seal breeding beaches and coves from mid-August to November. Kayakers are also asked to avoid entering caves which could be occupied by choughs - check the BMC Regional Access Database.

The Wales Marine Code, which is supported and promoted by Canoe Wales, aims to protect Wales' amazing wildlife through voluntary codes of conduct and seasonal agreed access restrictions. Following the Marine Code advice when out on the water helps to minimise disturbance to wildlife.

Ynys Cybi Code of Conduct

Whilst operating on and around Ynys Cybi please adhere to the following code of conduct. The code of conduct helps to protect the special features and wildlife on Ynys Cybi whilst giving your group a unique, memorable experience. In addition to the code of conduct, site guides included in this guide detail specific guidance for popular activity venues with high conservation value.

Respect

Respect the local community and other people using the outdoors.

Avoid obstructing roads, gateways to fields or entrances to buildings when parking your vehicle.

Try to keep the size of your group to a level that is appropriate to the venue you are using, and be aware not to overcrowd sites.

Be respectful when changing and use appropriate toilet facilities if available.

Keep noise to a minimum.

Communicate and share good practice with other activity guides in your area.

Commit to working together to resolve problems.

Clean, check and dry equipment after activities to stop the spread of invasive aquatic species.



Enhance

Avoid disturbing wildlife – be prepared to change your route if necessary. Ensure that you understand and respect any site-specific access agreements that are in place to protect wildlife from disturbance/prevent damage to the environment.

Observe voluntary agreements to avoid accessing specified cliffs where seabirds nest from February to July inclusive.

Share site guides and environmental resources with all staff.

Leave a site cleaner than you find it.

Keep to established paths to conserve heathland and minimise impact to wildlife

Report any pollution incidents/environmental damage to Natural Resources Wales. If you come across wildlife stranded, injured or in distress, contact the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

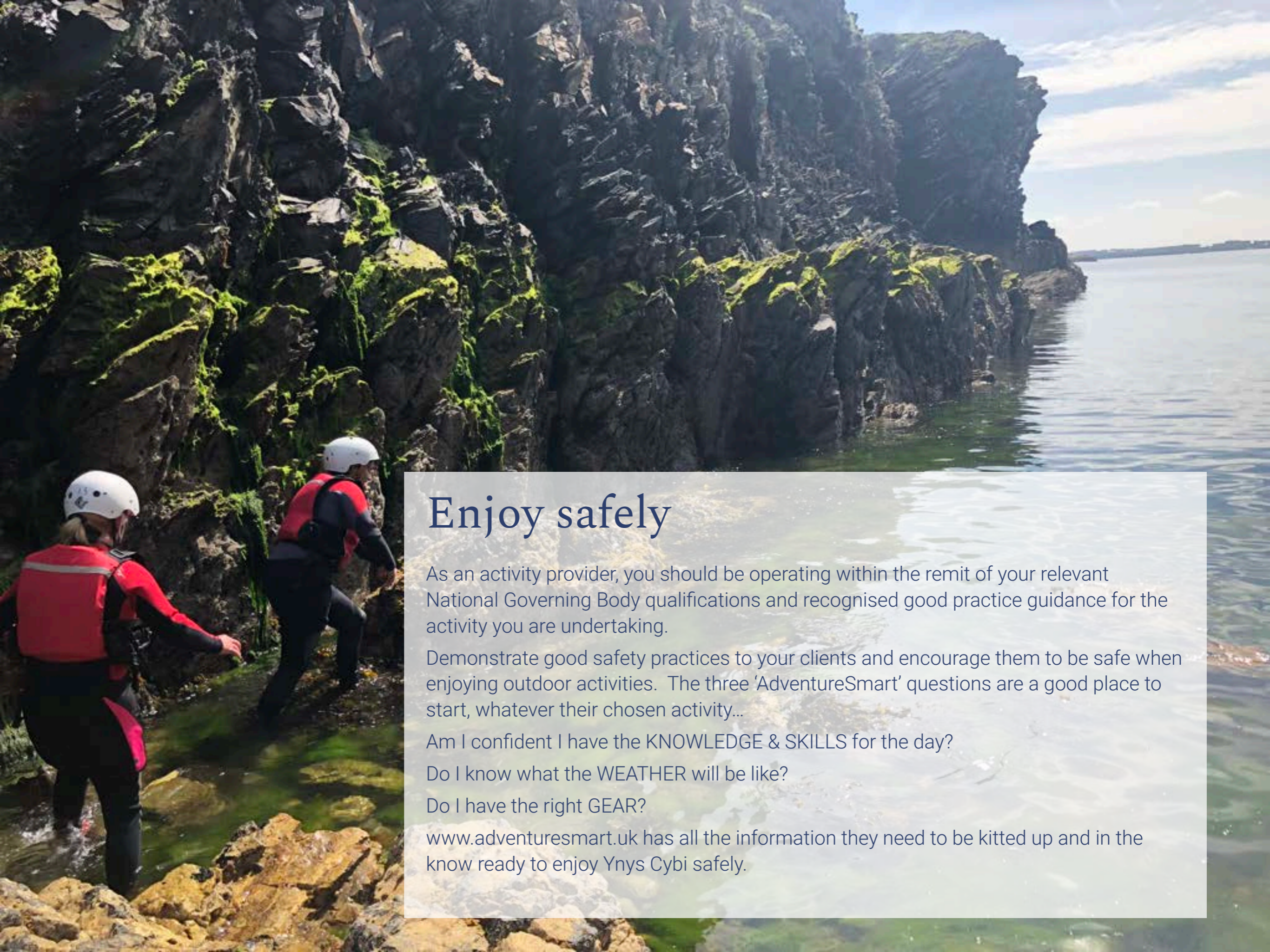
Do not damage the rocks, or remove any fossils from the coast.

It is generally illegal to introduce permanent fixtures at activity venues on Ynys Cybi. Discuss any essential permanent fixtures such as stakes and bolts with the statutory bodies and relevant parties prior to installing or replacing.

Before developing venues for activities, find out about land ownership/access at the site, and contact local conservation organisations to determine if there are any sensitive wildlife/geology or access issues in that area. Natural Resources Wales can be contacted in the first instance to find out about the conservation status of a site.

Learn more about the habitats, species, geology and heritage of Ynys Cybi. You can then pass on this knowledge to your clients which improves the visitor welcome and encourages them to respect, enhance and further enjoy the special character of the area.





Enjoy safely

As an activity provider, you should be operating within the remit of your relevant National Governing Body qualifications and recognised good practice guidance for the activity you are undertaking.

Demonstrate good safety practices to your clients and encourage them to be safe when enjoying outdoor activities. The three 'AdventureSmart' questions are a good place to start, whatever their chosen activity...

Am I confident I have the KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS for the day?

Do I know what the WEATHER will be like?

Do I have the right GEAR?

www.adventuresmart.uk has all the information they need to be kitted up and in the know ready to enjoy Ynys Cybi safely.

Site guide 1 - Gogarth bay & Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain)



The area between and inland of the coast between Ynys Lawd (South Stack) and North Stack contains some of the highest and most dramatic sea cliffs found anywhere in Wales, as well as the most extensive area of coastal heath on Anglesey.

Seasonal restrictions

There are extensive colonies of nesting sea-birds, with nearly 15,000 guillemots and razorbills nesting on some of the cliffs, with a further dozen or so chough and peregrine sites. The exceptionally rare south stack fleawort and spotted rock rose also grow in specific locations on the cliff tops close to South Stack. Seasonal restrictions mapped need to be observed. Detail on these can be found British Mountaineering Council's Regional Access Database.

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Parking

RSPB Plas Nico site (SH210818)
RSPB South Stack Café and visitor centre (SH208820) and at two further areas at the end of the road overlooking the lighthouse
The Breakwater Country Park cafe and toilets (SH226832)

Most parking in this area is now "pay and display". Approach roads are narrow and inconsiderate parking has occasionally blocked access for emergency vehicles. Do not obstruct gateways, even if they appear unused as these provide essential access for the landowners, coastguard and other emergency services.

Gogarth bay & Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain)

Gogarth bay: The area is most well-known for rock climbing. The sea cliffs around Gogarth Bay are steep, challenging and generally only suitable for the more experienced climbers.

The sea-kayak passage (in both directions, depending on tides) from Porth Dafarch to Caergybi (Holyhead) and in particular the tidal races around North Stack is also very well-known as a committing sea-kayaking challenge.

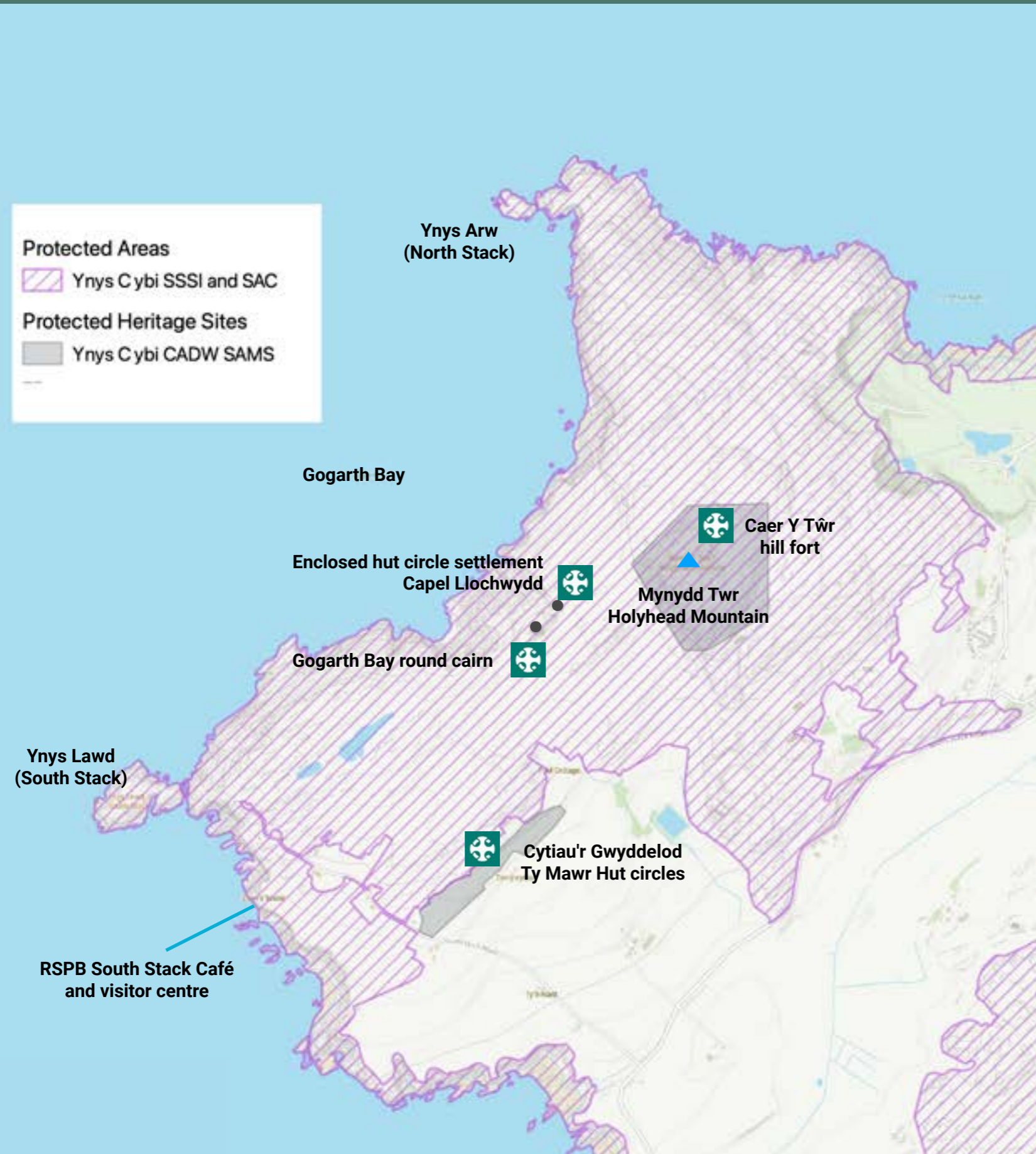
There are also very committing long-established sea-level traverses along the base of sections of Gogarth Bay.



Site-specific guidance Gogarth bay

- Agreed restrictions to protect nesting sea-birds usually apply between February 1st - July 31st to the following cliffs: - Blacksmith Zawn, Smurf Zawn, Penlas Rock area, Red Walls, Mousetrap Zawn, Trinity Walls and Flytrap Zawn.
- Climbers are asked to avoid climbing the route "Pentothal" on Main Cliff between these dates due to a large number of nesting auks (guillemots and razorbills).
- Choughs and peregrines also nest on both Main Cliff and Upper Tier Cliffs, usually away from established climbing routes but occasionally temporary restrictions are necessary – these will be noted on both the BMC RAD and on-site signage.
- Take care not to place kit bags on any flowering flora.
- Seals use the caves of Parliament House Caves for pupping from mid-August to the end of November and all users need to avoid the cave area at this time.
- The owners of North Stack lighthouse object to groups using their structures to tie ropes or equipment.
- The cliffs to the immediate south frequently have nesting sea birds and in the autumn all users, including kayakers, should avoid the area due to pupping seals.
- Sea-level traverses pass through nationally important sea-bird nesting venues - seasonal restrictions apply.
- No new fixed equipment, climbing stakes or similar are to be placed without consulting the RSPB.

Gogarth bay & Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain)



Protected areas

Nature sites and areas of countryside can be 'designated', which means they have special status as protected areas because of their natural and cultural importance.

Checking whether an area is protected is easy using the [Natural Resources Wales mapping tool](#).

Gogarth bay & Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain) are within the Glannau Ynys Gybi / Holy Island Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area (SPA). The SPA which gives special protection to birds extend offshore.

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Scheduled monuments (SAMs).

Sites of archaeological importance with specific legal protection against damage or development. CADW is responsible for their protection

Gogarth bay & Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain)

Scheduled Monuments

The Welsh name for Holyhead Mountain is Mynydd Twr, and this name is thought to derive from the Roman watch tower, a form of an early lighthouse that was constructed near the summit in the 2nd century AD. The tower itself is called Caer y Tŵr, or “tower fortress”

Caer Y Tŵr hill fort is an iron age settlement on the summit of Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain). The first excavations in the 1860's were followed by more in the 1970's, and together they discovered the remnants of some 50 buildings scattered across up to 20 acres of the hillside, which are the remains of an Iron Age farming community that originated in 500 B.C. Charcoal of heather and sedge has been discovered on the site, and it is thought probable that these were used for bedding or flooring. The surrounding land was ploughed by the community; wheat, oats and barley seeds have been discovered, though it is unlikely that such farming could ever have been intensive in this landscape. The rearing of livestock appears to have been their chief concern, but evidence of limpet and periwinkle shells offer a clear indication that food was also taken from the sea.



▲ Cytiau'r Gwyddelod/Ty Mawr Hut circles

Further down and close to South stack, there are also the remains of a group of Iron Age huts that show evidence of being occupied from the middle part of the Stone Age, the Neolithic Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Examine an Ordnance Survey map of Anglesey and you will notice several places on Holy Island marked Cytiau'r Gwyddelod. This is the Welsh for "Irishmen's Huts" with this cluster known as Ty Mawr.

Gogarth bay & Mynydd Twr (Holyhead Mountain)



Mynydd Twr

Mynydd Twr provides a more accessible venue than the sea-cliffs. Generally, the cliffs and habitats found here are more robust. However, choughs are known to nest on the left-hand side of the cliffs, and while at this time seasonal restrictions are not deemed necessary, as the birds have become habituated to climbers, this situation may change. Groups and climbers should be aware of the birds and if their presence causes alarm or distress to the birds, they should move away and climb elsewhere.

Photo credit: Andrew Locking andrewswalks.co.uk



Chough ▲

Three quarters of the UK chough population live in North Wales, predominantly on sea cliffs. Their Welsh name *brân goesgoch* means red-legged crow.

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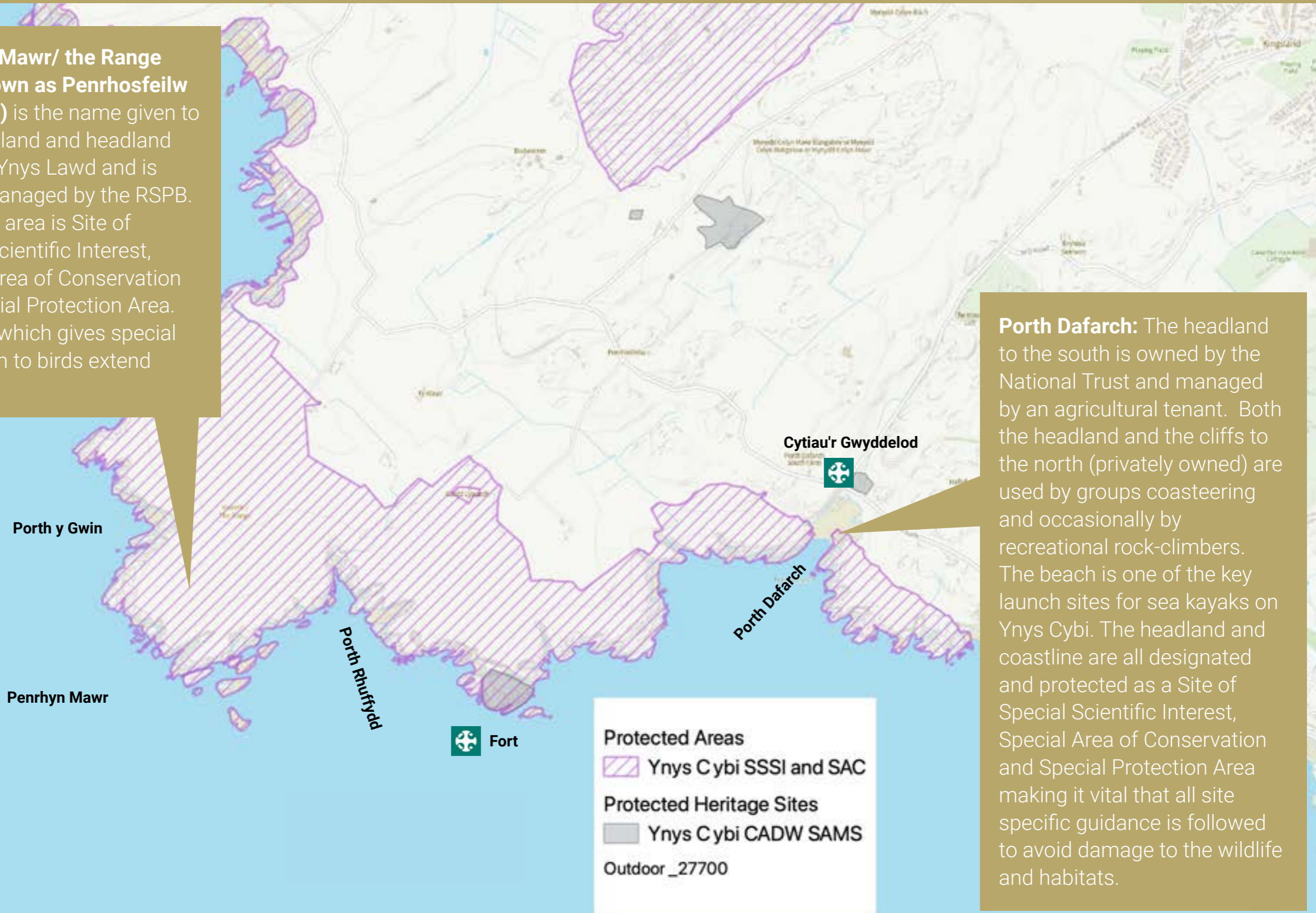
Site-specific guidance:

- Stick to the made-up paths, shortcuts across the heathland can also disturb ground and shrub nesting birds.
- Do not create new approach paths to the cliffs.
- Do not build cairns or shelters. Many of the stone features on the mountain are protected ancient or historic features, including iron age structures.
- Mountain biking not permitted.
- Move away from disturbed or distressed birds.

Site guide 2 - Penrhyn Mawr (the Range) & Porth Dafarch

Penrhyn Mawr/ the Range (also known as Penrhosfeilw Common) is the name given to the heathland and headland south of Ynys Lawd and is mainly managed by the RSPB. All of this area is Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area. The SPA which gives special protection to birds extend offshore.

Porth Dafarch: The headland to the south is owned by the National Trust and managed by an agricultural tenant. Both the headland and the cliffs to the north (privately owned) are used by groups coastering and occasionally by recreational rock-climbers. The beach is one of the key launch sites for sea kayaks on Ynys Cybi. The headland and coastline are all designated and protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area making it vital that all site specific guidance is followed to avoid damage to the wildlife and habitats.



Penrhyn Mawr (the Range) & Porth Dafarch

Agreed restrictions at Porth Dafarch

Agreed climbing restrictions listed on the BMC Regional Access Database. These also apply to any activity including coasteering.

Those using the area for recreation, particularly coasteering and climbing are asked to observe the following agreements to minimise disturbance of Chough:

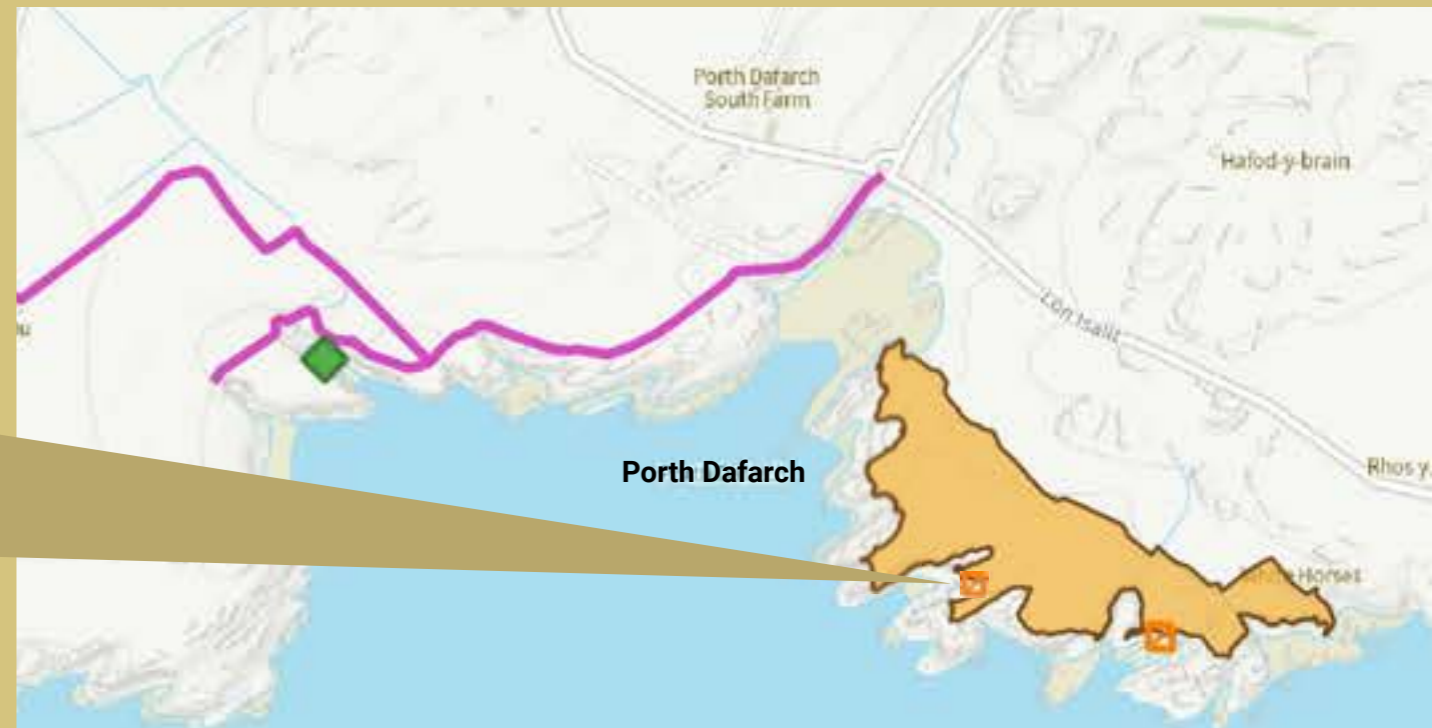
1. Yellow Brick Road and the cave to its right (south): During nesting season 1st March - 30th June, those using this section for coasteering and climbing are asked not to use the jumps and instead traverse the zawn as close to water level as possible.



Area permitted
1st March - 30th
June



Area NOT
permitted 1st
March - 30th
June



Access



BMC Seasonal Climbing Restrictions



Site of potential disturbance to nesting birds



PRoW



CRow Open Access

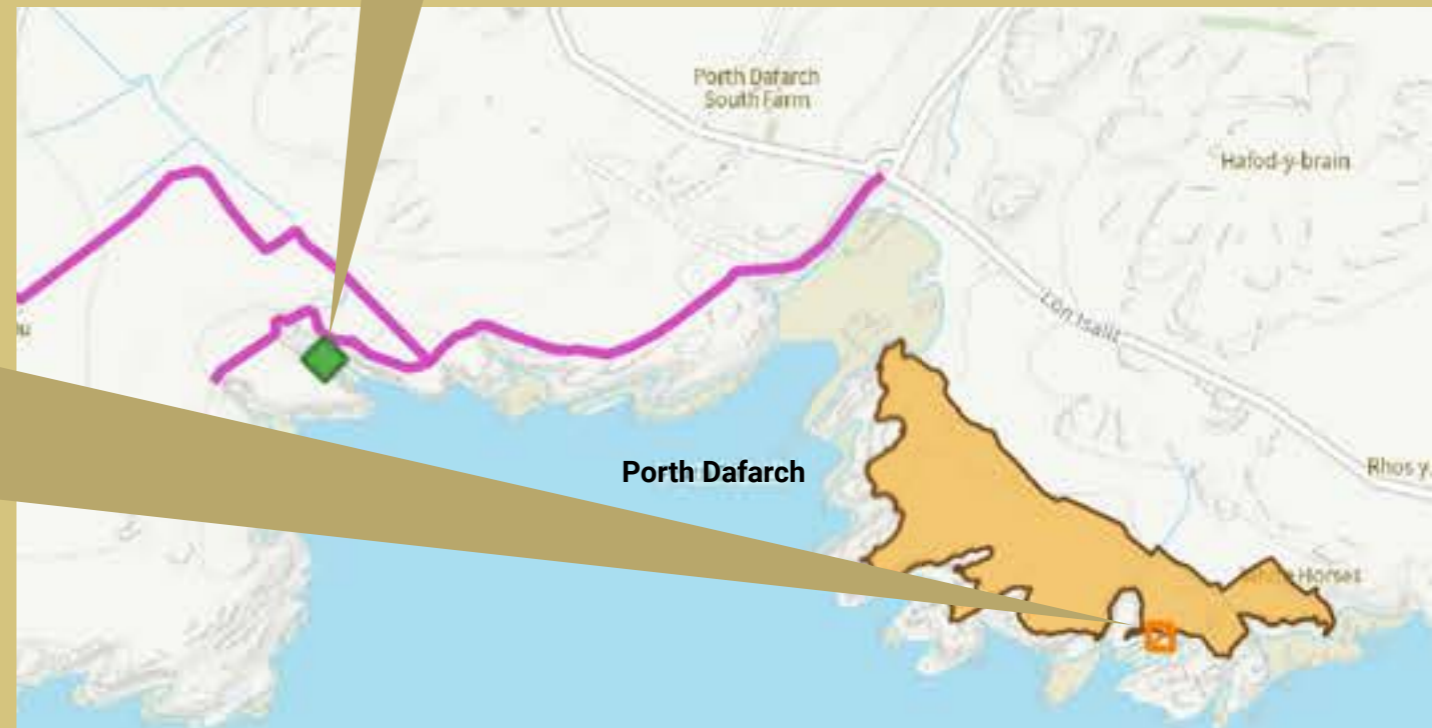
Penrhyn Mawr (the Range) & Porth Dafarch

2. Hanging Basket of Babylon to Stone Masonry inclusive, including the cave to the right (south): Restriction in place. Area not permitted 1st Feb - 30th June. Please do not abseil, climb, high-line or access the cave during this time.







The area of coastline where these Chough sites are located is designated as a Special Protection Areas (SPA). SPAs are designated because of rare or migratory birds and their habitats. Chough are a Schedule 1 protected species. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird. Penalties that can be imposed for criminal offences in respect of a single bird, nest or egg is an unlimited fine, up to six months imprisonment or both.

3. The third site is not a climbing venue, therefore it is not listed on the Regional Access Database. However, it has been identified as a site of potential disturbance therefore those coaststeering are asked to avoid this area 1st March - 30th June.



Access

-  BMC Seasonal Climbing Restrictions
-  Site of potential disturbance to nesting birds
-  PRoW
-  CRow Open Access

Penrhyn Mawr (the Range) & Porth Dafarch

Site-specific guidance Penrhyn Mawr & Porth Dafarch:

Birds

- There are agreed seasonal climbing restrictions in force on some cliffs faces, generally between March 1st and the end of June or July (depending on the species) between the British Mountaineering Council and the RSPB on many cliffs.
- Choughs are also known to nest in deep crevices and caves in some areas where coastering activities take place.
- Check for any local signage before setting off.
- During the nesting season, groups are advised to regularly check with the RSPB wardens at the Visitor centre at South Stack for the latest information.
- To minimise impact and to stay within the law, groups need to avoid congregating or having gear drops on cliff tops above nest sites.
- When coastering, if you come across a nest site, don't stop at this location, but continue to traverse quickly and quietly past the location, and avoid noisy activity such as group jumps which would cause disturbance and keep the adult birds off the nest and lead to the chicks dying.
- Be aware that if there are multiple groups following each other, there will be constant disturbance to nesting chough so leave space between groups during nesting restrictions (1st March - 30th June)
- Heathland is an important habitat for nesting songbirds, as well as being a vitally important feeding area for the chough. To avoid disturbance, please stick to the main approach paths while walking to the coast and keep dogs on short leashes. The area is also known for having adders; another good reason to keep dogs under close control!

Seals

- From August to November, seals do haul out for pupping on some of the western headlands around Porth y Gwin. Again, ensure that you visually check these areas before committing to any activity that could disturb these mammals and keep at least 100m away from any pupping seals.
- Seals can also be seen pupping at Porth Dafarch, again ensure you keep at least 100m away from them.



Penrhyn Mawr (the Range) & Porth Dafarch



Penrhyn Mawr

Site-specific guidance Penrhyn Mawr:

- The cliff tops of Penrhyn Mawr are a stronghold for the rare South Stack Fleawort. This plant is usually found on the very edge of the cliffs, between the coast path and the cliff top, be mindful it is easily damaged by trampling, temporary storage of bags or kit or by placing of belay stakes or similar.
- Cleaning vegetation or “gardening” of climbing routes needs to be completely avoided in these areas.
- No new fixed equipment, climbing stakes or similar are to be placed without consulting the RSPB.

Porth Ruffydd



Schedule Ancient monument, a “promontory fort” lies on the headland of Dinas Porth Ruffydd (referred to as “the Fortress” in climbing guides).

Various bronze and iron age artefacts have been discovered here, and the monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance knowledge of Romano British/Prehistoric settlement and defences.

The site is protected by law and digging, excavation, placing of stakes or moving soil or use of metal detectors is prohibited.

Porth Ruffydd itself contains the remains of a late 19th-century lifeboat station, which only operated for a few years, between 1891 and 1904. The station was closed and abandoned in 1904 due to the difficulties of getting enough men to form a crew and also due to the introduction of a steam-powered lifeboat at Holyhead that could cover the same area.

Penrhyn Mawr (the Range) & Porth Dafarch



Porth Dafarch

Site-specific guidance Porth Dafarch:

- Dogs are prohibited from the beach from May to the end of September.
- All craft using the slipway must adhere to the Isle of Anglesey Bylaws.
- Local authority managed car park and layby just off the minor road that leads from South Stack to Trearddur Bay.
- Parking can be limited, avoid blocking the highway or the approach to the beach.
- Do not park in the watersport drop-off bays.
- Do not park on the grass verges.

History

At Porth Dafarch there are (mainly on private land across the road from the beach) the remains of late Neolithic settlement lying close to the sea at the head of the small bay. The remains consist mainly of the foundations and walls of a number of small round huts and some prehistoric barrows and cist graves of possibly early Christian date. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Porth Dafarch was used from the mid-17th to early-19th century as an alternative to the main port of Holyhead when it was affected by adverse weather conditions in the Irish Sea. However, with the commencement of a steam service in 1822 and the construction of the Holyhead Breakwater, Porth Dafarch was no longer required as an alternative port.

Ynys Cybi

An explanation of key place names

The names sometimes used by recreational or modern users do not always reflect many locations' original or historic names. The original place names, as well as being important historical and cultural names in their own rights, also give an interesting insight into this area's previous land use and human occupation.

Ynys Cybi – Holy Island Named after St Cybi, an important bishop and saint, born in AD 453, of Cornish descent, and who travelled across Wales, founding churches and monasteries, including at Llanybi. He was granted the old Roman fort at Caergybi (Cybi's Fort) by Maelgwyn the King of Gwynedd, where he established a large monastery.

Gogarth – “garth” in Welsh means a high promontory or ridge, while the addition of “go” to make the name Gogarth, is thought to mean “below”, so Gogarth probably means “Beneath the promontory”

Mynydd Twr – (Holyhead Mtn) Literally means “mountain with a pile of stones”. Some people believe it means Tower Mountain, a reference to the Roman watchtower that once existed here but that would be spelled “Tŵr”.

Ynys Arw – North Stack Island Ynys means island. Arw is short for Garw, which means rough or harsh island – easy to see why!

Ynys Lawd – South Stack Ynys means island and Lawd means frothy or foaming seas.

Penrhosfeilw - The name of the common on which Penrhyn Mawr and the old army ranges lie. Pen is Welsh for head or top, rhos is heath, and feilw is thought to be either a person's name or some people believe it could mean “mellow”. So, the literal translation could either be “top of the mellow heath” or the “top of Meilw's heath”.

Penrhyn Mawr - literally means “large or big headland”. Also known by some as “The Range”, as it was used as a military firing range during WW2.

Porth Dafarch – Some people suggest that “Dafarch” is a shortened version of “dau farch”, which literally means “two mares”. However this is thought not to be the case, and Dafarch is more likely a person's name, possibly derived from the Irish Davanagh.

Porth y Gwin – Bay of wine – possibly a reference to a shipwreck or smuggling.

Porth Ruffydd – Porth means bay, and Ruffydd is thought to be a person's name, a shortened version of Gruffydd.

Ynys Cybi

Other resources

Anglesey Marine Code - <https://wildseas.wales/content/downloads/Anglesey-Marine-Code.pdf>

National Coasteering Charter - <https://www.nationalcoasteeringcharter.org.uk>

Wild Seas Wales - <https://wildseas.wales>

Anglesey AONB - <https://www.visitanglesey.co.uk/en/about-anglesey/aonb/>

BMC Regional Access Database - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/>

CADW - <https://cadw.gov.wales>

RSPB - <https://www.rspb.org.uk>

Green Guide for Climbers - <https://shop.thebmc.co.uk/product/the-green-guide-for-climbers/>

Ynys Cybi Landscape Partnership - <https://www.anglesey.gov.wales/en/Business/Regeneration/Holy-Island-Landscape-Partnership/Partnership.aspx>

BMC Green guide to challenge events in the hills - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-green-guide-challenge-events-hills>

The purple guide to health, safety and welfare at outdoor events - <https://www.thepurpleguide.co.uk/index.php/the-purple-guide-lite>

iSee North Wales Coast - <https://www.snowdonia-active.org/our-films-publications/>



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Points of Contact

If you have a legal interest in the sites mentioned in this guide or require designation information contact NRW enquiries 0300 065 3000.

Anglesey AONB 01248 750057

RSPB Ynys Lawd/South Stack 01407 762100