

Compliance Assessment Report CAR_NRW0049093

Permit being assessed: BP0230101

For: DEVILS BRIDGE STW NEAR ABERYSTWYTH, held by DWR CYMRU CYFYNGEDIG

At: DEVILS BRIDGE STW, NEAR ABERYSTWYTH, DYFED, ,, .

Type of assessment carried out: Site Inspection, Reason: Routine.

On 13/06/2025, between 09:57 and 11:02.

Parts of permit assessed: See criteria listed below

NRW Lead Officer: Bethan Lewis, accompanied by: Carol Fielding, John McMahon.

Report sent to: CARS mailbox, CARS mailbox, on 21/10/2025.

1. Summary of our findings (full details in section 4)

Part of permitted activity assessed (criteria)	Assessment result	Permit condition
WQ-B1 - Water Quality - Operations - Permitted activities	Assessed (A)	
WQ-B2 - Water Quality - Operations - The site	C2 Significant	1
WQ-B2 - Water Quality - Operations - The site	C2 Significant	9(d)
WQ-C1 - Water Quality - Emissions and monitoring - Emissions to water	C3 Minor	7
WQ-C3 - Water Quality - Emissions and monitoring - Emissions of substances not controlled by emission limits	Assessed (A)	

Result types are explained in more detail in the 'Important Information' section below.

2. What action is required?

Criteria	Action needed	Complete by
WQ-B2	Extend the reedbed to cover an area of at least 426 square metres, or apply for a permit variation or new Environmental Permit to enable you to discharge sewage effluent from a reedbed of less than 426 square metres.	21/02/2026
WQ-B2	Ensure that reed growth covers at least 75% of the reedbed.	21/02/2026
WQ-C1	Install flow measurement structure(s) at Devil's Bridge STW to enable the daily volume and instantaneous flow rate of the discharge to be measured or determined as required.	21/02/2026

Action criteria codes are listed in the 'Important information' section below.

3. What will happen next?

Any non-compliance we have identified and recorded on this form is an offence. It can result in criminal prosecution and/or suspension or revocation of your permit.

You are non-compliant with your permit.

We are currently considering taking enforcement action against you for the non-compliance recorded above. We will contact you in due course.

4. Details of our assessment

This was a pre-planned site inspection of Devil's Bridge Sewage Treatment Works (permit number: BP0230101) carried out by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) staff Bethan Lewis, Carol Fielding and John McMahon. The NRW staff were accompanied during the inspection by a Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) operative.

Summary

The site inspection commenced at 09:57 hours on the 13 June 2025 and concluded at 11:02 hours. The weather at the time of the inspection was dry and sunny. It had however been very wet the previous day.

The NRW staff were led through the treatment process from inlet to outfall, with the DCWW operative explaining how the works operated.

The site operator visits Devil's Bridge STW once a fortnight.

The population equivalent for the site is 25, however when excluding non-residents, this reduces to just 12.

Treatment Process

The inlet to Devil's Bridge STW consists of a tank used for primary settlement. This tank is shown in photograph 1 below. Sludge from the inlet tank is removed to a nearby sludge holding tank as shown in photograph 2 below. The sludge holding tank is emptied as and when required.



Photograph 1: Inlet tank used for primary settlement



Photograph 2: Sludge holding tank

Following primary settlement, sewage enters a Biological Aerated Filter (BAF) as shown in photograph 3 below. The BAF consists of several compartments, with sewage passing from one compartment to the next. Flows subsequently enter a secondary settlement tank as shown in photograph 4 below.



Photograph 3: Biological Aerated Filter (BAF)



Photograph 4: Secondary settlement tank

Following secondary settlement, flows are discharged to a reedbed as shown in photograph 5 and 6 below. The reedbed at Devil's Bridge STW currently covers an area of approximately 250 square metres. This is a breach of condition 1 of Devil's Bridge STW's permit which states that the discharge shall have "*passed through a reedbed of at least 426 square metres*". At the time of the site inspection, the reedbed at Devil's Bridge STW consisted of approximately 40% reeds (*Phragmites*), with the remainder comprising of a willow tree, a sycamore tree, bramble and rosebay willowherb. This is a breach of condition 9(d) of Devil's Bridge STW's permit which states that "*the works shall be operated and maintained in accordance with good operational practice such that reed growth is established and maintained to cover at least 75 percent of the bed*". In response to these two breaches, two category 2 non-compliances have been recorded above for non-compliances which have the potential to have a significant impact or effect on the environment, people and/or property.

NRW deem that the non-compliances with regards to both the total dimension of the reedbed and percentage cover of *Phragmites* has the potential to have a significant impact on the Coedydd a Cheunant Rheidol Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Coedydd a Cheunant Rheidol SSSI/SAC is an internationally important old sessile oak woodland. It is both categorised by and expresses a particularly rich assemblage of hyper-oceanic mosses and liverworts. These bryophytes require high humidity and as a result many of them are concentrated in and around the watercourses and streams that flow through the site. There are a number of rare and more unusual species that are very sensitive to increased nutrient levels within the Nant Lletys, the watercourse that Devil's Bridge STW discharges into, as well as within the "mist-zone" of the stream. As Devil's Bridge STW's reedbed is not functioning to its full capacity, there may be increased nutrients entering the Nant Lletys. As increased nutrient levels has the potential to directly impact on these species, NRW deem that the permit breaches in relation to the reedbed should be categorised as category 2 non-compliances. To rectify the non-compliances, DCWW are asked to extend the reedbed to cover an area of at least 426 square metres, or apply for a permit variation or new Environmental Permit to enable them to discharge sewage effluent from a reedbed of less than 426 square metres. DCWW are also asked to ensure that reed growth covers at least 75% of the reedbed. DCWW must complete these actions by no later than the **21 February 2026**.

As DCWW no longer carry out their own ground maintenance, contractors working on behalf of DCWW currently attend Devil's Bridge STW once a year to manage the reedbed. Given the non-compliance recorded against condition 9(d) above, it may be advisable for DCWW to increase the frequency of the contractors' visits to ensure that reed growth is maintained appropriately.



Photograph 5: Reedbed



Photograph 6: Reedbed

Flows discharge from Devil's Bridge STW's reedbed via a pipe as shown in photograph 7 below. The angle of this pipe can be adjusted to control the volume of effluent retained within the reedbed. This enables DCWW to manage final effluent quality. As shown in photograph 7, flows discharging from the reedbed appeared clear at the time of the inspection.



Photograph 7: Discharge from reedbed

Final effluent at Devil's Bridge STW passes through an appropriately labelled final effluent sampling point as shown in photographs 8 and 9 below.



Photograph 8: Final effluent sampling point signage



Photograph 9: Final effluent sampling point

Final effluent from Devil's Bridge STW eventually discharges into the Nant Lletys at SN 73680 77001. The discharge point is shown in photograph 10 below. The discharge into the Nant Lletys was clear and odourless at the time of the site inspection with no signs of sewage fungus at the outfall.



Photograph 10: Final effluent outfall into the Nant Lletys

Conditions 4, 5 and 6 of Devil's Bridge STW's permit state that the quantity of final effluent discharged into the Nant Lletys cannot exceed 1.6 litres per second, 140 cubic metres per day, or 29 cubic metres per day during dry weather flow conditions. From visual observation, there was no indication at the time of the site inspection that these volumes and rates were being exceeded. Given the site's population equivalent of just 25, it is also highly unlikely that these volumes and rates are being exceeded. Despite this, condition 7 of the permit states that "*flow measurement structure(s) shall be provided and maintained to enable the daily volume and instantaneous flow rate of the Discharge to be measured or determined as*

required". No flow measurement structures currently exist at Devil's Bridge STW. This represents a breach under condition 7. A category 3 non-compliance has therefore been recorded above for a non-compliance which has the potential to have a minor or minimal impact or effect on the environment, people and/or property. To rectify this non-compliance, NRW ask DCWW to install flow measurement structure(s) at Devil's Bridge STW to enable the daily volume and instantaneous flow rate of the discharge to be measured or determined as required. A deadline of the **21 February 2026** has been set for this.

Final comments

We wish to thank the DCWW operative for accompanying the NRW staff at the time of the above site inspection. If DCWW wish to discuss the content of this Compliance Assessment Report (CAR), or are unable to meet any of the above deadlines, we encourage them to contact the NRW officer noted above as soon as possible.

In this document 'Natural Resources Wales' means the Natural Resources Body for Wales established by Article 3 of the Natural Resources Body for Wales (Establishment) order 2012.

If you have any queries about this report, or to discuss completion of any actions, please contact the NRW Officer named above.

Important information

Legal status of this report

Your permit is issued to you under the Environmental Permitting Regulations. You have a responsibility to comply with the conditions of your permit and prevent pollution/harm to the environment. You must also ensure that you comply with any other relevant legislation that may apply to your site's operations.

This report explains the findings of our assessment and any action you are required to take. We categorise non-compliance using our guidance for assessing non-compliance at regulated sites.

When we find potential non-compliance/s we will normally give you advice on how to maintain compliance.

To correct non-compliance, we may:

- require you to take specific actions
- issue a notice
- review the conditions of your permit.

Any advice and guidance we give will be without prejudice to any other enforcement response that we consider may be required.

Assessment results and non-compliance categories (used in section 1):

Assessment result	Description
Assessed (A)	Assessed or assessed in part, no evidence of non-compliance found
Action only (X)	Action only relating to the activity assessment
Ongoing (O)	Ongoing non-compliance, not scored

Non-compliance category	Description
C1 Major	Potential to have a major, serious, persistent and/or extensive impact or effect on the environment, people and/or property
C2 Significant	Potential to have a significant impact or effect on the environment, people and/or property
C3 Minor	Potential to have a minor or minimal impact or effect on the environment, people and/or property
C4 No environmental impact	Non-compliance at a regulated site that cannot foreseeably have any impact on the environment, people and/or property

If your assessment result in Section 1 is suspended, what does this mean?

In line with our guidance, we may suspend non-compliance for up to six months to allow time for remedial action to be taken. These will be re-instated if the action is not completed.

Full list of water quality action criteria (used in section 1 and 2):**WQ A: Management**

- WQ-A1 General management

WQ B: Operations

- WQ-B1 Permitted activities
- WQ-B2 The site
- WQ-B3 Operating techniques
- WQ-B4 Improvement programme
- WQ-B5 Pre-operational conditions

WQ C: Emissions and monitoring

- WQ-C1 Emissions to water
- WQ-C2 Emissions to land
- WQ-C3 Emissions of substances not controlled by emission limits
- WQ-C4 Installation of monitoring boreholes

WQ D: Information

- WQ-D1 Records
- WQ-D2 Reporting
- WQ-D3 Notifications

Enforcement response

Any permit condition non-compliance is an offence and we may take legal action against you. Action we take can include prosecution, serving a notice on you and/or suspension or revocation of your permit. See our Enforcement and Sanctions Guidance for further information.

Data protection notice

You should make sure that anyone named in this report knows that the information it contains will be processed by Natural Resources Wales to fulfil its regulatory and monitoring functions and to maintain the relevant public register(s).

We may also use and/or disclose the report in connection with:

- offering or providing you with our literature or services relating to environmental matters
- consulting with the public, public bodies and other organisations (e.g. Health and Safety Executive, local authorities) on environmental issues
- carrying out statistical analysis, research and development on environmental issues
- providing public register information to enquirers
- investigating possible breaches of environmental law
- assessing customer service satisfaction and improving our service
- Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations requests.

We may also pass it on to our agents or representatives to do these things on our behalf.

Disclosure of information – this report will be available to view on-line

If you think this report contains commercially confidential information that should not be placed on our public register, you must contact your local Natural Resources Wales office within **fifteen working days** of receiving this report, using the contact details in the accompanying email or letter. You must give a full explanation of why it should not be

added to our public register, including specifying which information is commercially confidential. We will assess your request and respond to you within 20 working days to let you know if we agree to your request.

What do I do if I disagree with the report or have a complaint?

If you disagree with this compliance assessment report, you should contact the lead officer without delay to discuss your concerns.

If you are unable to resolve the issue with the lead officer or their line manager you should contact our Customer Contact team on 0300 065 3000 (Monday to Friday 08:00 – 18:00), or email enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk for details of how to raise your dispute further through our Complaints and Commendations procedure.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales by phone on 0300 7900203 or by email at ask@ombudsman.wales

Welsh Language Standards

We are committed to establishing Natural Resources Wales as a naturally bilingual organisation. We will provide compliance reports in your preferred language.