

Delegated Decision Report

Application No:	26/0241	Statutory Period Expires:	31st July 2026
------------------------	----------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------

Site:	<i>Liberty Steel, Corporation Road, Newport NP19 4XE</i>		
Proposal:	<i>ENGINEERING WORKS TO CONSTRUCT RAISED BUND AND ACCESS RAMP AROUND APPROVED DATA CENTRE TO A CREST OF APPROXIMATELY 9.75M AOD, PARTIAL DEMOLITION OF A BUILDING, THE IMPORTATION OF FILL MATERIAL TO CREATE THE BUND & RAMP, SURFACING WORKS AND ALTERATIONS TO BUILDING ELEVATIONS TO ACCOMMODATE LEVEL CHANGES</i>		
Applicant:	<i>B. Hooton</i>		
Type:	Full	Ward:	Llanwern
Decision:	Granted & Conditions		

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Planning permission was granted with conditions for conversion of part of a large building at Liberty Steel / Alpha Steel to a data centre. This application now seeks permission for a raised earth bund around the area of the approved building to mitigate flood risk.

2. SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site is at the southern end of the Libert Steel / Alpha Steel complex on the east bank of the tidal River Usk just north of Julians Pill which is a tributary of the Usk.

3. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposed development is the creation of an earth bund around the approved data centre that would be approximately 25m wide and approximately 2.5m high. The scheme would also include an access ramp at 1:12 slope to bridge the level change from existing ground to the top of the bund. The bund would be effectively a square shape of 115m by 115m wrapping around and through demolished elements of the building. Provision of the bund will require the partial demolition of the retained 'steelworks' building on the site. The applicant explains this will involve the removal of external cladding but not the building framework itself.

4. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

Ref. No.	Proposal	Decision & Date
25/0983	CHANGE OF USE OF PART OF EXISTING INDUSTRIAL BUILDING (USE CLASS B2) TO DATA CENTRE (USE CLASS B8) INCLUDING RECLADDING OF EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS, INSTALLATION OF ASSOCIATED PLANT AND EQUIPMENT, AND ANCILLARY WORKS	GC 26 March 2026

5. NEWPORT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2011-2026)

The following Policies of the adopted Newport Local Development Plan (2011-2026)

SP1 – Sustainability

SP3 – Flood risk

SP8 – Special Landscape Areas

GP1 – Climate Change

GP5 – Natural Environment

GP6 – Quality of Design

GP7 – Environmental Protection & Public Health

CE2 – Waterfront Development

CE9 – Coastal Zone

5.4 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

- WILDLIFE AND DEVELOPMENT (December 2025)

6. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 6.1 Natural Resources Wales: Require conditions in relation to construction to prevent adverse impacts on the River Usk SAC, a condition to deal with unsuspected contamination and conclude the proposal would have no adverse impact on flood issues.
- 6.2 National Grid Electricity Distribution: Advise of Equipment in the area and safe working practices.
- 6.3 Wales & West Utilities: No assets affected.
- 6.4 Health & Safety Executive: Advise of pipeline and explosive risks but do not object.
- 6.5 Heneb: No objection.
- 6.6 NCC Highways: No objection.
- 6.7 NCC SAB: Generic comments.

7. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

5 no. Neighbour and Ward member notification letters were sent on 29.04.2026. A Site Notice was put up on 15.04.2026.

- 7.1 No responses have been received.

8. ASSESSMENT

Key Issues

- 8.1 The key issues relevant to the determination of this application are:

- Flooding
- Impacts on the River Usk SAC / Habitat Regulations Assessment
- Materials
- Partial demolition
- Changes to Building (Demolition)

Flooding

- 8.2 The site lies within Flood Zone 3 for tidal flooding and is undefended. Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN 15) advises that the fundamental principle is to restrict new development in Zone 3 subject to limited exceptions outlined in Section 10 of the TAN. In that section the following advice is offered:

Proposals which are not highly vulnerable will only be appropriate if they are essential to the Development Plan Strategy to regenerate an existing settlement or achieve key economic or environmental objectives. Any redevelopment proposal must be consistent with the acceptability considerations in Section 11.¹

- 8.3 Section 11 sets out a series of acceptability criteria in terms of flood frequency, flood depth and flood velocity on the site and on access routes between the site and dry land for the lifetime of the development and including the impacts of climate change over that lifetime.
- 8.4 In this case the development proposed is an earth bund and it is inherently non-vulnerable in nature. The bund is to support a change of use approval for part of a steelworks to a data centre that has already been approved (25/0983). Under that permission the new data centre was to be elevated above flood levels within an existing building to mitigate flood risk. In this proposal that building will be surrounded by an earth bund as described in #3.1.



- 8.5 The purpose of the bund is to provide additional flood protection to the proposed data centre. Given the principal of the data centre is already established the acceptability of this use in this location is not relevant to this decision. The key flood risk arising from the bund is flood water displacement within the flood plain. However the hydraulic

¹ Paraphrased

modelling provided effectively shows that the impacts of the bund are negligible in flood terms with no worsening of flooding elsewhere. CNC/NRW have not objected to the proposal on flood grounds and as such the bund is acceptable in terms of flood risk and its impact on flooding. Policies SP3, GP1 and GP7 are complied with since the risk of flooding to the development itself is acceptable and because the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Impacts on the River Usk SAC / Habitat Regulations Assessment

8.6 In terms of the nearby European Sites (SACs / SPA) the species of interest are birds associated with the SACs & SPA and otters, that is mobile species that might use the site itself or nearby riverbank areas for foraging, resting, transit and breeding especially the nearby banks of Julian's Pill which flows into the adjacent River Usk SAC and the banks of the Usk itself. Other risks are associated with potentially contaminated run-off (chemically and by sediment) entering the nearby watercourses.

8.7 Risk to birds, otter and fish species and water quality in general terms would be:

- Directly via Mobilisation of Sediment / Contamination and a reduction in water quality (chemically and turbidity) with that water then flowing into the Lower Usk SAC directly or via Julians Pill.
- Indirectly via Noise & General Disturbance during construction and operation.

The site of itself is of no or negligible value to species associated with the SAC being a semi-derelict building and minimal curtilage of compacted ground and hardstanding.

8.8 In terms of the construction phase the risk to water quality and associated SAC interests arises from mobilisation of sediment and ground contamination via works of ground disturbance with mobilised sediment at risk of wash out from the site via existing contamination pathways, that is by directly flowing to Julians Pill or the Usk.

8.9 Additionally disturbance to otter and bird features on the wider site would arise from the construction activities themselves, that is noise, vibration and lighting.

8.10 An appropriate CEMP will help to control risks to water quality and general disturbance on the wider site and is proposed at Condition 02, see summary table.

8.11 The bund requires either the relocation or importation of inert materials to form the required landform. The risk is that these materials are contaminated and will lead to contaminated run-off entering the local water environment. This risk can be controlled by Condition 03.

8.12 Subject to conditions the construction phase of the scheme will have controllable and minimised risks and is very unlikely to have any significant effect on the nearby SACs.

8.13 In terms of operation the development it is an inert landform and of itself it is incapable of having impacts on the nearby Usk SAC, for example by lighting, noise or vibration.

8.14 Overall subject to the proposed conditional regime the risk to SAC interests is very low to negligible. CNC/NRW have reviewed the applicant's shadow Habitat Regulation Assessment and has concluded that:

We consider the proposed development has the potential to damage the River Usk Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Providing the impact pathways referenced

above for the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are adequately addressed, NRW consider the notified features of the SSSI will also be adequately safeguarded.

- 8.15 NCC has completed an appropriate assessment as part of this report and arrives at similar conclusions to the CNC/NRW on the risks to the SAC and the measures required to mitigate them to an acceptable level. As such there is no reason to think that CNC/NRW would disagree with the conclusions of the Council on any Habitat Regulations point and some of the conditions that CNC/NRW require are to be applied to this permission. CNC/NRW have asked for an unforeseen contamination condition but that is not appropriate here since there has been no requirement for the normal suite of decontamination conditions that would have assessed contamination risk on the site and required a decontamination strategy. In this case there is neither foreseen nor unforeseen contamination risk due to the lack of ground investigation and in any event no works to existing ground are proposed. It is however necessary to control the chemical content of the imported fill material to ensure no new contamination risk is imported to this riverbank environment. Subject to the proposed conditions Policies GP5 and GP7 are complied with.

Appropriate Assessment Summary Table

Impact	Fish	Otter	Birds
Construction: Disturbance; light, noise, vibration	No significant impact due to limited / low risk of vibration impact – main issue would be passage of heavy vehicles and dumping of the material	Potential Impact on otters using the adjacent river bank areas for foraging, resting up or transit. Controllable via CEMP to limit hours of operation, site lighting and to screen the site to prevent access and light spill. Impacts can be controlled and reduced to slight via conditional controls. Proposed Conditions 02 CEMP	Potential Impact on birds using the adjacent river bank for foraging, resting up or transit. Controllable via CEMP to limit hours of operation, site lighting and to screen the site to prevent access and light spill. Impacts can be controlled and reduced to slight via conditional controls. Proposed Conditions 02 CEMP
Construction: Mobilisation of sediment & contamination during	Potential impact if construction site drainage is not controlled with polluted waters (from ground contamination) entering the Julians Reen / Pill and / or the River Usk. Risk is controllable via the conditional regime which would require details of construction site management of waters and methods to control run-off in quantity and quality. Long-term the site would need to show how contamination risks to the wider environment and human health were controllable.	See left.	See left.

	Conditions require base line assessments and decontamination measures. Proposed Conditions 02 CEMP 03 Imported Materials		
Operation: General Noise & Disturbance	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.
Operation: run-off / contamination mobilisation	Control of imported materials will protect chemical qualities of run-off and the form itself will stabilise and is unlikely to be eroded and produce sediment. Proposed Conditions 03 Imported Materials	See left.	See left.

Imported Materials

- 8.16 A condition to control the chemical composition of the bund will be required to ensure contamination risks to the River Usk SAC are avoided and in the general interests of wider environmental protection. Subject to such a condition these risks will be mitigated and the development can proceed. Policies GP5 and GP7 are complied with.
- 8.17 CNC/NRW have also requested an unforeseen contamination condition. However this is not appropriate in relation to this proposal. See Paragraph 8.15.
- 8.19 The scheme is for the creation of an earth bund and as such control over the characteristics of the material used to make that bund is seen as sufficient to prevent pollution risks and no unforeseen contamination condition is necessary.

Partial Demolition

- 8.20 The bund construction will wrap around the data centre building and to accommodate it the steelworks building to the north of the data centre will be 'de-clad' with siding and roof panels removed but structural elements retained. Elements of the steelworks building to the immediate east of the data centre site have already been removed without prior approval but this is a fait accompli and not seen as prejudicial to this application. The bund will be constructed through this de-clad element effectively surrounding the retained data centre element. The required demolition is not considered to have any significant planning impact and can be agreed. In any event the partial demolition is a permitted activity subject to prior approval.

Changes to Building

- 8.21 The proposal will also result in changes to the external appearance of the building with personnel and vehicular doors being adjusted to accommodate the changed external levels. These changes are minor and acceptable. Policies GP2 (Visual Amenity) and GP6 (Design) are complied with.

Surfacing & Drainage

- 8.22 The applicant has also sought permission for surfacing works but has provided no details of those. He advises that a condition for those details is acceptable so there would be no loss of control over this matter should the works be approved. The extent of the works means that this will be a SAB scheme so control over drainage is also retained and in any event the receiving water body is the tidal Usk which on past experience has been allowed to receive unrestricted discharge. In any event control over surface water drainage will be retained under other powers and need not be duplicated here. Subject to conditional control in relation to materials any works of surfacing would be acceptable.

9. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. This duty has been considered in the evaluation of this application. It is considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable increase in crime and disorder as a result of the proposed decision.

9.2 *Equality Act 2010*

The Equality Act 2010 identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership.

9.3 Having due regard to advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

9.4 The above duty has been given due consideration in the determination of this application. It is considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable impact upon persons who share a protected characteristic, over and above any other person, as a result of the proposed decision.

9.5 ***Planning (Wales) Act 2015 (Welsh language)***

Section 31 of the Act clarifies that impacts on the Welsh language may be a consideration when taking decisions on applications for planning permission so far as it is material to the application. This duty has been given due consideration in the determination of this application. It is considered that there would be no material effect upon the use of the Welsh language in Newport as a result of the proposed decision.

9.6 ***Newport's Well-Being Plan 2018-23***

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 imposes a duty on public bodies to carry out sustainable development in accordance with the sustainable development principle to act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This duty has been considered during the preparation of Newport's Well-Being Plan 2018-23, which was signed off on 1 May 2018. The duty imposed by the Act together with the goals and objectives of Newport's Well-Being Plan 2018-23 have been considered in the evaluation of this application. It is considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of wellbeing objectives as a result of the proposed decision.

10. **CONCLUSION**

10.1 The proposal is acceptable subject to the attached conditions and planning permission is granted.

11. **DECISION**

Granted and Conditions

01 The development shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans and documents:

- Drawing 10544-ECL-XX-XX-DR-C-0004 B - AI Facility Floor Plan and Elevations
- Drawing 10544-ECL-XX-XX-DR-C-0007 A - Proposed Raised Platform, Site Layout
- Drawing 10544-ECL-XX-XX-DR-C-0008 C - Sections through Proposed Platform and Ramp

- Drawing 10544-ECL-XX-XX-DR-C-0009 - Site Location Plan
- Drawing 10544-ECL-XX-XX-DR-C-0014 A - Deconstruction Details

Reason: In the interests of clarity and to ensure the development complies with the submitted plans and documents on which this decision was based.

Pre- commencement conditions

02 CEMP: No work including demolition shall commence on site until such a time that a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA. The CEMP shall include details of:

- Details of site enclosure; height form and location of fencing.
- Details of site lighting showing that there will be no increase in light levels along the ecologically sensitive riverbank environment.
- Details of the storage of materials, aggregates and waste materials including maximum heights and locations and information on how these materials will be contained within the working area so that they do not enter the SAC or wider environment directly or indirectly.
- Details of control over construction site drainage demonstrating that waters polluted by either chemicals or sediment will not enter the SAC.
- Details of the storage of fuels or other chemicals, demonstrating how any leaks will be contained.
- Details of a buffer strip between the working area and the SAC that shall be demarcated by fencing which is to be retained for the duration of the construction programme. No materials shall be stored, vehicles trafficked, wastes disposed of or fires lit within the identified buffer strip.
- Pollution Prevention: demonstrating how relevant Guidelines for Pollution Prevention and best practice will be implemented, including details of emergency spill procedures and incident response plan.
- Details of the persons and bodies responsible for activities associated with the CEMP and emergency contact details.
- Details of working methods to reduce noise and disturbance to the River Usk SAC.

Following the LPA's written agreement the CEMP shall be implemented as agreed for the duration of all works of development on the site.

Reason: to protect the ecological integrity of the River Usk SAC and the wider environment. Policies SP1, SP5 and GP7.

Pre – construction conditions

03 Materials: Prior to their incorporation into the bund hereby approved all fill materials to be used in construction of the bund shall be chemically tested and their source of origin authenticated. The chemical testing results and the authentication documents shall be submitted to the LPA in writing and following the LPA's written agreement that the materials are acceptable they shall be incorporated into the bund. No materials shall be used other than the agreed materials.

Reason: the bund will be located close to the River Usk SAC and surface water run-off that is chemically contaminated would have adverse impacts upon the interests of the SAC and the wider environment. Policies GP5 & GP7.

04 No hard surfacing shall be provided on the site until such a time as details of the materials to be used have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the details approved and retained for the lifetime of development.

Reason: to retain control over the appearance of the development. Policies GP2 & GP6.

NOTE TO APPLICANT

01 This decision relates to the following unconditioned plans & documents:

- Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) – Addendum Note (Appendix 1)
- Hydraulic Modelling Report (June 2026)
- Flood Consequences Assessment – Supporting Note (Appendix 2)
- Appendix 2 - Flood Consequences Report
- Planning Statement (March 2026)

02 The development plan for Newport is the Newport Local Development Plan 2011 – 2026 (Adopted January 2015). The following Policies were relevant to the determination of this application:

SP1 – Sustainability

SP3 – Flood risk

SP8 – Special Landscape Areas

GP1 – Climate Change

GP5 – Natural Environment

GP6 – Quality of Design

GP7 – Environmental Protection & Public Health

CE2 – Waterfront Development

CE9 – Coastal Zone

03 The proposed development (including any demolition) has been screened under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and it is considered that an Environmental Statement is not required.

04 It is considered that the decision has been made in conformity with the Marine Policy Statement (2011) and in accordance with marine national planning policy contained within the Welsh National Marine Plan (2019) as demonstrated in the assessment of this proposal.

APPENDIX A – CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES OF THE RIVER USK SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)

4. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Background to Conservation Objectives:

- a. Outline of the legal context and purpose of conservation objectives.

Conservation objectives are required by the 1992 'Habitats' Directive (92/43/EEC). The aim of the Habitats Directives is the maintenance, or where appropriate the restoration of the

'favourable conservation status' of habitats and species features for which SACs and SPAs are designated (see Box 1).

In the broadest terms, 'favourable conservation status' means a feature is in satisfactory condition and all the things needed to keep it that way are in place for the foreseeable future. CCW considers that the concept of favourable conservation status provides a practical and legally robust basis for conservation objectives for Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites.

Achieving these objectives requires appropriate management and the control of factors that may cause deterioration of habitats or significant disturbance to species.

As well as the overall function of communication, Conservation objectives have a number of specific roles:

Conservation planning and management.

The conservation objectives guide management of sites, to maintain or restore the habitats and species in favourable condition.

Assessing plans and projects.

Article 6(3) of the 'Habitats' Directive requires appropriate assessment of proposed plans and projects against a site's conservation objectives. Subject to certain exceptions, plans or projects may not proceed unless it is established that they will not adversely affect the integrity of sites. This role for testing plans and projects also applies to the review of existing decisions and consents.

Monitoring and reporting.

The conservation objectives provide the basis for assessing the condition of a feature and the status of factors that affect it. CCW uses 'performance indicators' within the conservation objectives, as the basis for monitoring and reporting. Performance indicators are selected to provide useful information about the condition of a feature and the factors that affect it.

The conservation objectives in this document reflect CCW's current information and understanding of the site and its features and their importance in an international context. The conservation objectives are subject to review by CCW in light of new knowledge.

b. Format of the conservation objectives

There is one conservation objective for each feature listed in part 3. Each conservation objective is a composite statement representing a site-specific description of what is considered to be the favourable conservation status of the feature. These statements apply to a whole feature as it occurs within the whole plan area, although section 3.2 sets out their relevance to individual management units.

Each conservation objective consists of the following two elements:

1. Vision for the feature
2. Performance indicators

As a result of the general practice developed and agreed within the UK Conservation Agencies, conservation objectives include performance indicators, the selection of which should be informed by JNCC guidance on Common Standards Monitoring¹.

There is a critical need for clarity over the role of performance indicators within the conservation objectives. A conservation objective, because it includes the vision for the feature, has meaning and substance independently of the performance indicators, and is more than the sum of the performance indicators. The performance indicators are simply what make the conservation objectives measurable, and are thus part of, not a substitute for, the conservation objectives. Any feature attribute identified in the performance indicators should be represented in the vision for the feature, but not all elements of the vision for the feature will necessarily have corresponding performance indicators.

As well as describing the aspirations for the condition of the feature, the Vision section of each conservation objective contains a statement that the factors necessary to maintain those desired conditions are under control. Subject to technical, practical and resource constraints, factors which have an important influence on the condition of the feature are identified in the performance indicators.

The ecological status of the water course is a major determinant of FCS for all features. The required conservation objective for the water course is defined below.

4.1 Conservation Objective for the water course

The capacity of the habitats in the SAC to support each feature at near-natural population levels, as determined by predominantly unmodified ecological and hydromorphological processes and characteristics, should be maintained as far as possible, or restored where necessary.

The ecological status of the water environment should be sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population of each feature. This will include elements of water quantity and quality, physical habitat and community composition and structure. It is anticipated that these limits will concur with the relevant standards used by the Review of Consents process given in Annexes 1-3.

Flow regime, water quality and physical habitat should be maintained in, or restored as far as possible to, a near-natural state, in order to support the coherence of ecosystem structure and function across the whole area of the SAC.

All known breeding, spawning and nursery sites of species features should be maintained as suitable habitat as far as possible, except where natural processes cause them to change.

Flows, water quality, substrate quality and quantity at fish spawning sites and nursery areas will not be depleted by abstraction, discharges, engineering or gravel extraction activities or other impacts to the extent that these sites are damaged or destroyed.

The river planform and profile should be predominantly unmodified. Physical modifications having an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, including, but not limited to, revetments on active alluvial river banks using stone, concrete or waste materials, unsustainable extraction of gravel, addition or release of excessive quantities of fine sediment, will be avoided.

River habitat SSSI features should be in favourable condition. In the case of the Usk Tributaries SSSI, the SAC habitat is not underpinned by a river habitat SSSI feature. In this case, the target is to maintain the characteristic physical features of the river channel, banks and riparian zone.

Artificial factors impacting on the capability of each species feature to occupy the full extent of its natural range should be modified where necessary to allow passage, e.g. weirs, bridge sills, acoustic barriers.

Natural factors such as waterfalls, which may limit the natural range of a species feature or dispersal between naturally isolated populations, should not be modified.

Flows during the normal migration periods of each migratory fish species feature will not be depleted by abstraction to the extent that passage upstream to spawning sites is hindered.

1 Web link: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2199>

Flow objectives for assessment points in the Usk Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy will be agreed between EA and CCW as necessary. It is anticipated that these limits will concur with the standards used by the Review of Consents process given in Annex 1 of this document.

Levels of nutrients, in particular phosphate, will be agreed between EA and CCW for each Water Framework Directive water body in the Usk SAC, and measures taken to maintain nutrients below these levels. It is anticipated that these limits will concur with the standards used by the Review of Consents process given in Annex 2 of this document.

Levels of water quality parameters that are known to affect the distribution and abundance of SAC features will be agreed between EA and CCW for each Water Framework Directive water body in the Usk SAC, and measures taken to maintain pollution below these levels. It is anticipated that these limits will concur with the standards used by the Review of Consents process given in Annex 3 of this document.

Potential sources of pollution not addressed in the Review of Consents, such as contaminated land, will be considered in assessing plans and projects.

Levels of suspended solids will be agreed between EA and CCW for each Water Framework Directive water body in the Usk SAC. Measures including, but not limited to, the control of suspended sediment generated by agriculture, forestry and engineering works, will be taken to maintain suspended solids below these levels.

4.2 Conservation Objective for Features 1-5:

- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* (EU Species Code: 1095);
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri* (EU Species Code: 1096);
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* (EU Species Code: 1099);
- Twaite shad *Alosa fallax* (EU Species Code: 1103);
- Allis shad *Alosa alosa* (EU Species Code: 1102);
- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* (EU Species Code: 1106);
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio* (EU Species Code: 1163)

Vision for features 1-5

The vision for this feature is for it to be in a favourable conservation status, where all of the following conditions are satisfied:

FCS component	Supporting information/current knowledge
The conservation objective for the water course as defined in 4.1 above must be met. The population of the feature in the SAC is stable or increasing over the long term.	Refer to sections 5.1 to 5.5 for current assessments of feature populations. Entrainment in water abstractions directly impacts on population dynamics through reduced recruitment and survival rates. Fish stocking can adversely affect population dynamics through competition, predation, and alteration of population genetics and introduction of disease.
The natural range of the feature in the SAC is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future. The natural range is taken to mean those reaches where predominantly suitable habitat for each life stage exists over the long term. Suitable habitat is defined in terms of near-natural hydrological and geomorphological processes and forms e.g. suitable flows to allow upstream migration, depth of water and substrate type at spawning sites, and ecosystem structure and functions e.g. food supply (as described in sections 2.2 and 5). Suitable habitat need not be present throughout the SAC but where present must be secured for the foreseeable future. Natural factors such as waterfalls may limit the natural range of individual species. Existing artificial influences on natural range that cause an adverse effect on site integrity, such as physical barriers to migration, will be assessed in view of 4.2.4 There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain the feature's population in the SAC on a long-term basis.	Some reaches of the Usk SAC are more suitable for some features than others e.g. the Senni has important populations of brook/river lamprey and salmon but is not used by shad due to its small size and distance from the estuary. These differences influence the management priorities for individual reaches and are used to define the site units described in section 3.2. Further details of feature habitat suitability are given in section 5. In general, management for one feature is likely to be sympathetic for the other features present in the river, provided that the components of favourable conservation status for the water course given in Section 4.1 are secured. The characteristic channel morphology provides the diversity of water depths, current velocities and substrate types necessary to fulfil the habitat requirements of the features. The close proximity of different habitats facilitates movement of fish to new preferred habitats with age. The presence of hard bank revetments in a number of active alluvial reaches e.g. through Brecon and upstream of Abergavenny, adversely affects the processes that maintain suitable habitat for the SAC features. Hydrological processes in the Usk are currently affected by large abstractions, especially at Prioress Mill and Brecon Weir. However, there are many smaller abstractions not considered to cause a problem at present.

	Shad and salmon migration can be affected by acoustic barriers and by high sediment loads, which can originate from a number of sources including construction works. Allis and Twaite shad are affected by range contraction due to artificial barriers to migration in the Usk. It is likely that this loss of habitat affects their maintenance in the SAC on a long-term basis.
--	---

Performance indicators for features 1-5 The performance indicators are part of the conservation objective, not a substitute for it. Assessment of plans and projects must be based on the entire conservation objective, not just the performance indicators.			
Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> : <i>Performance indicators for feature condition</i>			
Attribute	Specified Limits	Comments	Relevant Unit[s]
(a) Distribution within catchment	Suitable habitat adjacent to or downstream of known spawning sites should contain <i>Petromyzon ammocoetes</i> .	This attribute provides evidence of successful spawning and distribution trends. Spawning sites known to have been used within the previous 10 years and historical sites considered still to have suitable habitat, are shown in Annex 4. Spawning locations may move within and between sites due to natural processes or new sites may be discovered overtime. Silt beds downstream of all sites identified in Annex 4 will be sampled for presence or absence of ammocoetes. Where apparently suitable habitat at any site is unoccupied feature condition will be considered unfavourable .	1-5
(b) Ammocoete density	Ammocoetes should be present in at least four sampling sites each not less than 5km apart.	This standard CSM attribute establishes a minimum occupied spawning range, within any sampling period, of 15km. In the Usk, spawning sites within units 2 to 5 will be	2 - 5

		assessed against this attribute.	
	Overall catchment mean >0.1m ⁻² (Harvey & Cowx 2003) ¹	Although this attribute is not used in CSM for sea lamprey, baseline monitoring in the Usk gave an overall catchment mean of 2.27 ammocoetes m ⁻² in suitable habitat ² , therefore 0.1 m ⁻² is a conservative threshold value for unfavourable condition.	
Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> and River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> : <i>Performance indicators for feature condition</i>			
Attribute	Specified Limits	Comments	Relevant Unit[s]
(a) Age/size structure of ammocoete population	Samples < 50 ammocoetes ~ 2 size classes Samples > 50 ammocoetes ~ at least 3 size classes	This gives an indication of recruitment to the population over the several years receding the survey. Failure of one or more years recruitment may be due to either short or long term impacts or natural factors such as natural flow variability, therefore would trigger further investigation of the cause rather than leading automatically to an unfavourable condition assessment.	2-10
(b) Distribution of ammocoetes within catchment	Present at not less than 2/3 of sites surveyed within natural range	The combined natural range of these two species in terms of ammocoete distribution includes all units above the tidal limit i.e. all except unit 1. Presence at less than 2/3 of sample sites will lead to an unfavourable condition assessment.	2-10
	No reduction in distribution of ammocoetes	Reduction in distribution will be defined as absence of ammocoetes from all samples within a single unit or sub-unit/tributary, and will lead to an unfavourable condition assessment.	

(c) Ammocoete density	Optimal habitat: $>10\text{m}^{-2}$ Overall catchment mean: $>5\text{m}^{-2}$	Optimal habitat comprises beds of stable fine sediment or sand $>15\text{cm}$ deep, low water velocity and the presence of organic detritus, as well as, in the Usk, shallower sediment, often patchy and interspersed among coarser substrate.	2-10
Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> and Allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i> : <i>Performance indicators for feature condition</i>			
Attribute	Specified Limits	Comments	Relevant Unit[s]
(a) Spawning distribution	No decline in spawning distribution	Spawning distribution is assessed by kick sampling for eggs and/or observations of spawning adults. A representative sample of sites within units 2 to 5 will be monitored at 3 yearly intervals. Absence from any site in 2 consecutive surveys will result in an unfavourable condition assessment.	1-5
<i>Performance indicators for factors affecting the feature</i>			
(a) Flow	Targets are set in Relation to river/reach type(s)	Targets equate to those levels agreed and used in the Review of Consents (see Annex 1). Shad are particularly sensitive to flow. The ideal regime is one of relatively high flows in March-May, to stimulate migration and allow maximum penetration of adults upstream, followed by rather low flows in June-September, which ensures that the juveniles are not washed prematurely into saline waters and grow rapidly under warmer conditions. The release of freshets to encourage salmonid migration should therefore be discouraged on shad rivers during this period.	1-5
Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> : <i>Performance indicators for feature condition</i>			
(a) Adult run size	Conservation Limit	CSM guidance states: Total run size at least matching an agreed reference level,	All

	complied with at least four years in five (see 5.4)	including a seasonal pattern of migration characteristic of the river and maintenance of the multi-seawinter component. As there is no fish counter in the Usk, adult run size is calculated using rod catch data. Further details can be found in the EA Usk Salmon Action Plan.	
(b) Juvenile densities	Expected densities for each sample site using HABSCORE	CSM guidance states: These should not differ significantly from those expected for the river type/reach under conditions of high physical and chemical quality. Assessed using electro fishing data.	6-10
<i>Performance indicators for factors affecting the feature:</i> Water quality			
(a) Biological quality	Biological GQA class A	This is the class required in the CSM guidance for Atlantic salmon, the most sensitive feature.	6-10
(b) Chemical quality	RE1	It has been agreed through the Review of Consents process that RE1 will be used throughout the SAC [see Annex 3].	All
<i>Performance indicators for factors affecting the feature:</i> Hydromorphology			
(a) Flow	Targets are set in relation to river/reach type(s)	Targets equate to those levels agreed and used in the Review of Consents [see Annex 1].	All
Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i> : <i>Performance indicators for feature condition</i>			
a) Adult densities	No less than 0.2 m ⁻² in sampled reaches	CSM guidance states that densities should be no less than 0.2 m ⁻² in upland rivers (source altitude >100m) and 0.5 m ⁻² in lowland rivers (source altitude ≤ 100m). A significant reduction in densities may also lead to an unfavourable condition assessment.	2-10

(b) Distribution	Bullheads should be present in all suitable reaches. As a minimum, no decline in distribution from current	Suitable reaches will be mapped using fluvial audit information validated using the results of population monitoring. Absence of bullheads from any of these reaches, or from any previously occupied reach, revealed by ongoing monitoring will result in an unfavourable condition assessment.	2-10
(c) Reproduction/age structure	Young-of-year fish should occur at densities at least equal to adults	This gives an indication of successful recruitment and a healthy population structure. Failure of this attribute on its own would not lead to an unfavourable condition assessment.	2-10

4.3 Conservation Objective for Feature 6:

- European otter *Lutra lutra* (EU Species Code: 1355)

Vision for feature 6

The vision for this feature is for it to be in a favourable conservation status, where all of the following conditions are satisfied:

FCS component	Supporting information/current knowledge
The population of otters in the SAC is stable or increasing over the long term and reflects the natural carrying capacity of the habitat within the SAC, as determined by natural levels of prey abundance and associated territorial behaviour. The natural range of otters in the SAC is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future. The natural range is taken to mean those reaches that are potentially suitable to form part of a breeding territory and/or provide routes between breeding territories. The whole area of the Usk SAC is considered to form potentially suitable breeding habitat for otters. The size of breeding territories may vary depending on prey abundance. The population size should not be limited by the availability of suitable undisturbed breeding sites. Where these are insufficient they should be created through habitat enhancement and where necessary the provision of artificial holts. No otter breeding site should be subject to a level of disturbance that could have an adverse effect on breeding success.	Refer to section 5.9 for current assessment of feature population. Survey information shows that otters are widely distributed in the Usk catchment. While the breeding population in the Usk is not currently considered to be limited by the availability of suitable breeding sites, there is some uncertainty over the number of breeding territories which the SAC is capable of supporting given near-natural levels of prey abundance. The decline in eel populations may be having an adverse effect on the population of otters in the Usk. Restrictions on the movement of otters around the SAC, and between adjoining sites are currently a particular concern in the reach through Newport as a result of a continued decrease in undisturbed suitable riparian habitat.

Where necessary, potentially harmful levels of disturbance must be managed.			
The safe movement and dispersal of individuals around the SAC is facilitated by the provision, where necessary, of suitable riparian habitat, and underpasses, ledges, fencing etc. at road bridges and other artificial barriers.			
Performance indicators for feature 6 The performance indicators are part of the conservation objective, not a substitute for it. Assessment of plans and projects must be based on the entire conservation objective, not just the performance indicators.			
Attribute	Specified Limits	Comments	Relevant Unit(s)
Performance indicators for feature condition			
(a) Distribution	Otter signs present at 90% of Otter Survey of Wales sites	Ref: CCW Environmental Monitoring Report No. 19 (2005) ³	All
(b) Breeding activity	2 reports of cub/family sightings at least 1 year in 6	Ref: CCW Environmental Monitoring Report No. 19 (2005) ³	All
(c) Actual and potential breeding sites	No decline in number and quality of mapped breeding sites in subcatchments (see Ref)	Ref: CCW Environmental Monitoring Report No. 19 (2005) ³ In the Usk catchment, 77 actual or potential breeding sites have been identified, distributed throughout the catchment on the main river and tributaries.	All