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Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

# Environmental Assessment of Afon Dysynni Drought Permit (8021-1)

Final

March 2019

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## **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

Welsh Water's Drought Plan provides a comprehensive statement of the actions Welsh Water will consider implementing during drought conditions to safeguard essential water supplies to customers and minimise environmental impact. It encompasses a number of drought management options that will only be implemented if and when required and includes drought permit / order options.

A drought permit or order is a management action that, if granted, can allow more flexibility to manage water resources and the effects of drought on public water supply and the environment.

The objective of this report is to provide an independent and robust assessment of the potential environmental effects of implementing a drought permit at the Afon Dysynni, over and above those arising due to natural effects of drought and those which would occur under "normal" abstraction licence conditions.

The Afon Dysynni is located in Welsh Water's Tywyn / Aberdyfi Water Resource Zone (WRZ) which covers the small coastal area around the towns of Tywyn and Aberdyfi, supplying approximately 5000 people from two small river abstractions situated on the Afon Fathew and the Nant Braich-y-Rhiw.

The Afon Dysynni rises on the slopes of Cadair Idris and flows south-west from the western end of Llyn Mwyngil (Tal-y-Llyn Lake) draining a predominantly upland catchment (72.2km<sup>2</sup>) into Cardigan Bay, through a broad water lagoon north of Tywyn. The catchment is in a predominantly rural area incorporating the Cadair Idris National Nature Reserve and areas of the Dyfi Forest.

There are no designated sites with 500m of the drought permit impacted reach of the Afon Dysynni therefore no designations are considered to be at risk of being potentially impacted by implementation of the drought permit.

The assessment also considers how the proposed drought permit may affect the environment in combination with the effects of other existing abstraction licences, environmental permits and other drought management plans.

**This report is a 'shelf-copy' report which would be updated to support an application to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for a drought permit at Afon Dysynni, which may be required by Welsh Water in the future.**

## **PROPOSED DROUGHT PERMIT DETAILS**

In order to protect public water supplies within Welsh Water's Tywyn / Aberdyfi WRZ in the event of a future severe drought, Welsh Water would make an application to NRW for a drought permit to temporarily abstract water from a temporary river intake on the Afon Dysynni. Under normal conditions, Welsh Water does not make any abstractions from this river.

The proposed drought permit would authorise a temporary daily abstraction of up to 0.44Ml/d from a temporary intake on the Afon Dysynni in the Pont y Garth area. The following location is proposed as a potential site for the temporary intake:

- NRW Depot (NGR: SH635 070)

Suitable additional hardstanding for water tankers would be provided at the selected location if required, and the water abstracted would be transferred by water tanker to the water treatment works at Penybont (NGR: SH615 032). The study area is shown on **Figure 2.3**.

The temporary abstraction arrangements would be authorised for 6 months but would be removed sooner if water resources have returned to adequate levels to safeguard future water supplies, as agreed with Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

## **NEED FOR THE DROUGHT PERMIT**

Application for a drought permit is a precautionary approach. Due to the time needed to determine a drought permit application, Welsh Water will potentially apply for a drought permit more frequently than it will be used.

The justification for the drought permit sought will be set out in a "Needs Statement". This will be produced by Welsh Water at the time of a potential future application, and will form part of the full drought permit application.

## **ALTERNATIVE SOURCES CONSIDERED**

Details of alternative sources considered by Welsh Water will be completed at the time of application for the drought permit at Afon Dysynni. This will demonstrate justification for the proposed drought option details applied for.

## **POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF DROUGHT PERMIT IMPLEMENTATION**

The scope of the assessment has been defined by a screening and scoping exercise.

### ***Summary of the Hydrological Assessment***

The assessment has concluded that there is a **negligible** impact on river flows as a result of implementing the drought permit. Consequently, there are **negligible** impacts on the physical environment of the river, including water quality.

### ***Summary of the Environmental Features Screening***

In accordance with national drought planning guidance, environmental assessment is neither required nor included for features where screening has identified a minor or negligible impact. Screening has not identified any environmental features for which environmental assessment is required. No environmental impacts have, therefore, been identified for any of the features identified in the screening exercise.

### ***Cumulative Impacts***

No cumulative effects of implementing the Afon Dysynni abstraction drought permit with other drought order / permit schemes have been identified and there are no cumulative effects of implementing the drought permit with other existing licences, consents and plans are anticipated. However, this should be reviewed at the time of any future application for a drought permit at Afon Dysynni.

### **MITIGATION AND MONITORING**

The environmental assessment has identified negligible environmental impacts arising from implementation of a drought permit at Afon Dysynni. This has included consideration and assessment of impacts on sites designated for their environmental importance. No mitigation measures are currently proposed as a consequence.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, it has been concluded that the environmental effects on river flows, water quality and ecology of implementing a drought permit at Afon Dysynni, over and above those conditions that already exist under "normal", i.e. licensed, baseline conditions, with the onset of a natural drought, would be **negligible**.

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**Appendix A** – Hydrology and Hydrogeological Methodology

**Appendix B** – Hydrology and Physical Environment Assessment

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The objective of this Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) is to provide an independent and robust assessment of the potential environmental effects of the implementation of a drought permit by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (Welsh Water) to temporarily authorise daily abstraction of up to 0.44Ml/d from a temporary intake on the Afon Dysynni upstream of the Pont y Garth area. The following location is proposed as a potential site for the temporary intake:

- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Depot (NGR: SH635 070)

Suitable additional hardstanding for water tankers would be provided at the selected location if required, and the water abstracted would be transferred by water tanker to the water treatment works at Penybont (NGR: SH615 032). The study area is shown on **Figure 2.3**.

This EAR is a 'shelf-copy' report which would be updated in the event that Welsh Water needs to make an application during any future drought to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for a drought permit at Afon Dysynni. A drought permit is a management action that, if granted, can help ensure essential water supplies are maintained to homes and businesses. The circumstances under which a drought permit may be required is set out in the Welsh Water Drought Plan.

The assessment presented in this EAR considers the effects of implementation of the drought permit over a maximum period of six months. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the environmental impacts of the drought permit over and above any effects arising from natural drought conditions.

The study area and focus of this environmental assessment of the Afon Dysynni drought permit, covers the following waterbodies:

- The lower Afon Dysynni (GB511006414900)

This EAR includes discussion of the following:

- an assessment of the likely changes in river flow / water level regime due to implementing the proposed drought permit (**for a summary, see Section 4 of this report**)
- identification of the environmental features that are sensitive to these changes and an assessment of the likely impacts on these features (**see Section 5 of this report**)
- identification of mitigation measures that may be required to prevent or reduce impacts on sensitive features (**see Section 6 of this report**)

- recommendations for baseline, in-drought and post-drought permit monitoring requirements (**see Section 9 of this report**).

The environmental assessment has been conducted in accordance with Government regulations and using the Welsh Government / Natural Resources Wales Drought Plan Guideline<sup>1</sup> (DPG); specifically Section 5 and Appendices I and J, and Welsh Government / Defra / NRW / Environment Agency guidance on drought permits and drought orders<sup>2</sup>.

Consideration has been given to the potential impacts of drought permit implementation on statutory designated sites, including those designated under international law (Habitats Directive, Birds Directive and the Ramsar Convention) and national legislation (notably Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)).

In accordance with the DPG, the assessment also considers how the proposed drought permit may affect the environment in combination with the effects of existing abstraction licences, environmental permits and other relevant activities and plans. This is discussed further in Sections 3 and 7.

## **1.2 SUPPORTING STUDIES**

The DPG identifies in Section 5.4 that EARs are required as supporting documents to any drought permit or drought order application. The circumstances for which an environmental assessment is required are set out in **Box 1** below.

### **Box 1: Drought Plan Guidance - requirement for environmental assessment**

The DPG requires that all features that could be affected by implementation of a drought order / permit are listed in the EAR and that an assessment is made of how sensitive each feature is to the likely changes in hydrology, hydrogeology and geomorphology, due to implementing the drought order / permit.

The DPG requires a detailed environmental assessment for applications where sensitive features are likely to be subject to a major or moderate impact, or a minor impact where this applies to environmentally designated features. Further environmental assessment is **not** required for those drought orders / permits where there is certainty that there are no such impacted sensitive features.

This environmental assessment is based on data available at the time of writing and includes the environmental features and data types determined by Box 1 in Appendix I of the DPG (except where these are considered not to be relevant to this drought

<sup>1</sup> Natural Resources Wales (2017) *Water Company Drought Plan Technical Guideline*. Available at <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/684414/final-wc-drought-plan-guidance-2017.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=131656713580000000>, Accessed 04 February 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government / Defra / Natural Resources Wales / Environment Agency (2015) *Apply for a drought order or emergency drought order*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apply-for-a-drought-permit-drought-order-or-emergency-drought-order>. Accessed 21 December 2018.

permit). Data were requested from key consultees (including NRW).

Where appropriate, this report also identifies areas where there are deficiencies in data availability and makes recommendations for future data / information gathering and monitoring. Welsh Water will continue to engage closely with NRW to ensure that adequate and sufficient data / information are collated and kept up-to-date in subsequent years to inform future environmental assessments.

### **1.3 CONSULTATION**

Consultation is identified as an essential exercise in the preparation of the EAR. In preparing this ‘shelf-copy’ EAR for a drought permit for abstraction from the Afon Dysynni, consultation with regulators and wider stakeholders has been undertaken to gain feedback on potential adverse effects, gather data and discuss any required monitoring and / or mitigation measures.

Further consultation will be also be undertaken at the time of any future applications for the drought permit.

### **1.4 STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE REPORT**

This EAR comprises the following sections:

**Section 1: Introduction**

**Section 2: Background to the Drought Permit**

**Section 3: Approach**

**Section 4: Hydrology and the Physical Environment**

**Section 5: Environmental Features Assessment**

**Section 6: Mitigation**

**Section 7: Cumulative Impacts**

**Section 8: Summary of Residual Impacts**

**Section 9: Environmental Monitoring Plan (EMP)**

**Section 10: Conclusions**

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE DROUGHT PERMIT

### 2.1 WELSH WATER’S SUPPLY SYSTEM

Welsh Water supplies water to more than 3 million people. The Welsh Water supply area covers the majority of Wales and a small part of England. It is split into 24 WRZs (see **Figure 2.1**).

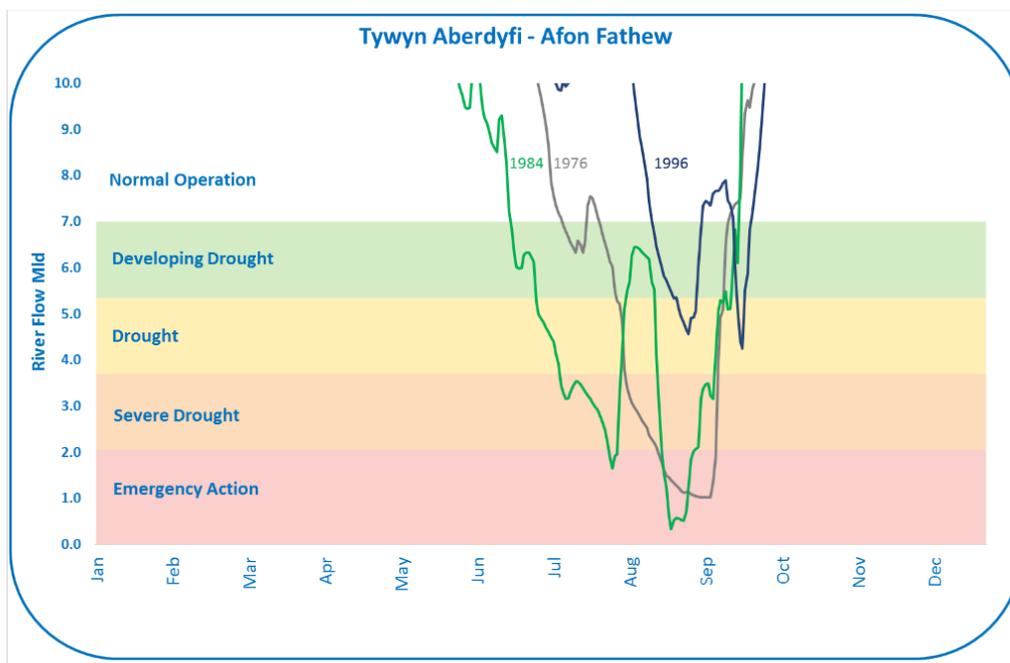
**Figure 2.1 Welsh Water Water Resource Zones**



The Tywyn / Aberdyfi WRZ covers the small coastal area around the towns of Tywyn and Aberdyfi, supplying approximately 5000 people from two small river abstractions on the Afon Fathew and the Nant Braich-y-Rhiw. The Nant Braich-y-Rhiw source is subject to a Hands-Off-Flow condition that comes into operation during most summer periods. There are no exports or imports of water for Tywyn Aberdyfi. The Afon Dysynni is located on the mainland, in the Tywyn Aberdyfi region.

The trigger levels for applying for a drought permit at the Afon Dysynni are shown in **Figure 2.2**, and are based on demand falling into the dark orange shading labelled as ‘severe drought’. Welsh Water’s assessment in its draft Drought Plan 2020 indicates that drought conditions severe enough to require an application for this drought option are unlikely to occur more frequently than at a return period of around once every 20 years. Fuller details of the work undertaken to assess this risk are provided in Annex 1 to the draft Drought Plan 2020.

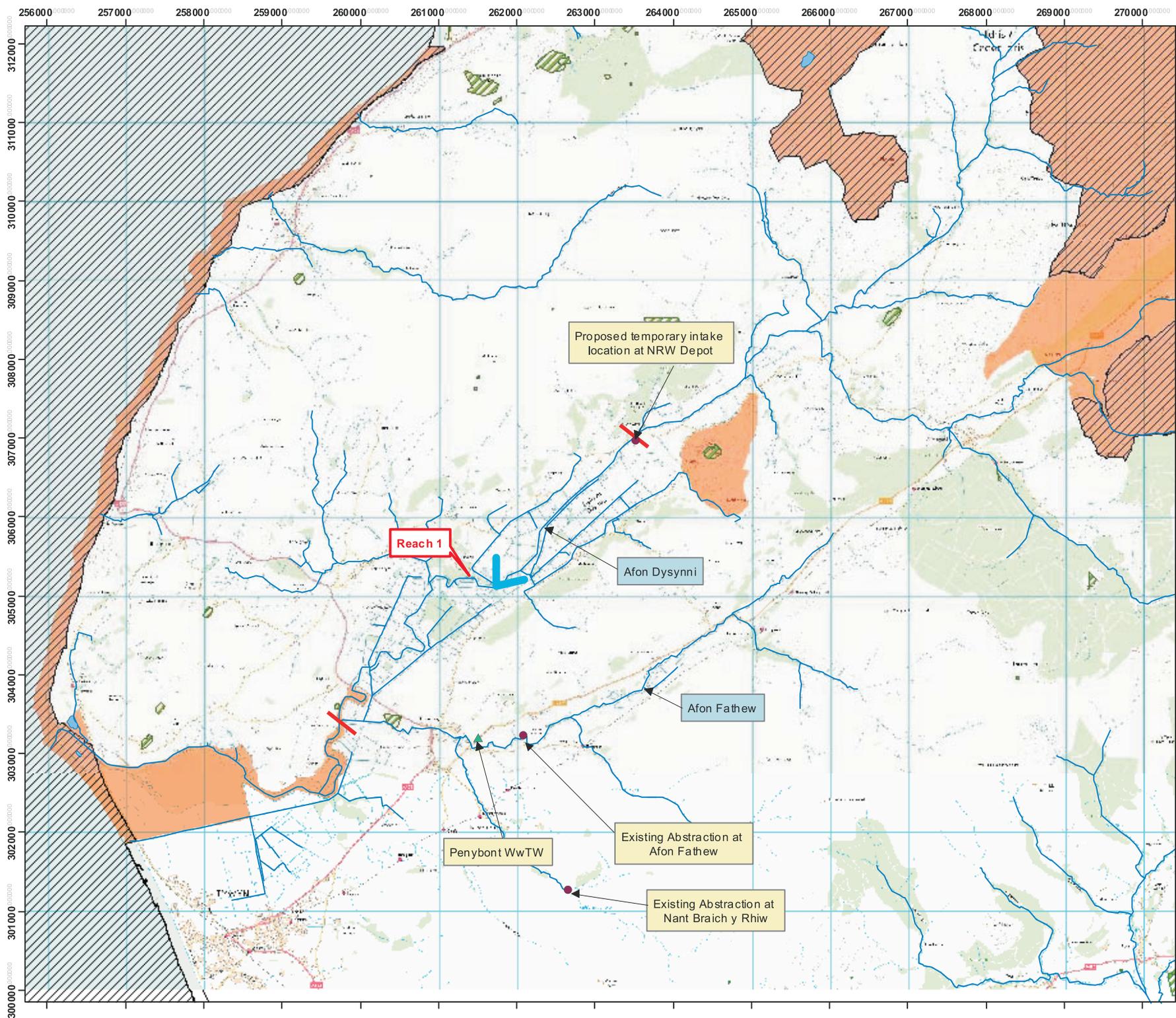
**Figure 2.2 Tywyn / Aberdyfi WRZ Drought Action Zones and Historic Droughts**



**2.2 DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS AT AFON DYSYNNI**

Welsh Water does not currently abstract any water from the Afon Dysynni. Water to supply the Tywyn Aberdyfi WRZ is normally abstracted from the Afon Fathew, at Brynecrug, and from Nant Braich y Rhiw, for treatment at Penybont water treatment works (WTW). Nant Braich y Rhiw is a tributary of the Afon Fathew, which itself is a tributary of the Afon Dysynni. The confluence of Afon Fathew with Afon Dysynni is some 6.7km downstream from Pont y Garth, and therefore the proposed drought permit is not expected to have any impact on the flows in these two tributaries or Welsh Water’s operations there.

The study area is illustrated on **Figure 2.3**.



**Legend**

- Abstraction
- ▲ Penybont WwTW
- Hydrological Reach
- Water Courses
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- ▨ Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- ▧ Special Area of Conservation
- Direction of Flow



Scale: 1:45,000  
 Note: All locations are approximate  
 This drawing incorporates Ordnance Survey Information  
 © Crown copyright and database rights 2019

Project Title: Welsh Water Drought Plan Environmental Assessment

Figure Title: Study Area: 8201-1 Tankering raw water from Dysynni

Figure Number: Figure 2.3	Date: February 2019
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## **2.3 WELSH WATER'S DROUGHT PLANNING PROCESS**

Water companies in England and Wales are required to prepare and maintain Statutory Drought Plans under Sections 39B and 39C of the Water Industry Act 1991, as amended by the Water Act 2003, which set out the management and operational steps a water company will take before, during and after a drought. The Water Industry Act 1991 defines a drought plan as '*a plan for how the water undertaker will continue, during a period of drought, to discharge its duties to supply adequate quantities of wholesome water, with as little recourse as reasonably possible to drought orders or drought permits*'.

The Drought Direction (Wales) 2017 states that revised Drought Plans should be submitted according to the following schedule:

*4(b) for a revised drought plan –*

*if section 39B(6)(a) of the Act applies, within 6 months after the date on which the material change of circumstances occurs; and*

*if section 39B(6)(c) of the Act(c) applies, no later than 4 years after the date on which its drought plan, or its last revised drought plan, is published.*

## **2.4 STATEMENT OF THE NEED FOR DROUGHT PERMIT**

This section will be completed at the time of application for a drought permit.
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## **2.5 DROUGHT PERMIT – REGULATORY ARRANGEMENTS**

In periods of unusually low rainfall, when water resources become scarce, the Water Resources Act 1991, as amended by the Environment Act 1995 and the Water Act 2003, allows for three mechanisms for temporarily augmenting water supplies from rivers, lakes, reservoirs and groundwaters: drought permits; ordinary drought orders; emergency drought orders.

Drought permits are granted by NRW, and allow a water company powers to abstract from specified water sources, or to modify or suspend the conditions set out in existing abstraction licences. Drought orders are granted by the Welsh Ministers and give powers either to a water company or to NRW to abstract from specified water sources, or to modify or suspend the conditions set out in existing abstraction licences, but also to allow the discharge of water to specified places, modify or suspend conditions relating to a discharge or prohibit or limit particular non-essential uses of water as set out in the Drought Plan (Wales) Direction 2017. Emergency drought orders grant the same powers as a drought order, but in addition, confer powers to prohibit or limit water uses as specified by the water company and allow the set up and supply of water by means of standpipes and/or water tanks or rota cuts.

Drought permits and orders may be granted for a period of up to six months and they can be extended for up to a further six months.

As part of the drought order/permit application process, water companies are required to prepare an Environmental Report setting out anticipated effects of the proposal, including the effect on other abstractors and sufficient information to inform assessments, where applicable, in relation to the Habitats Directive, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW), and the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Further information on the requirements for the environmental assessment and reporting according to legislation and national guidance are provided in Section 3.

## **2.6 REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

This section will be completed at the time of application for a drought permit, setting out the alternative options to the drought permit that Welsh Water has considered in addressing the risks to essential public water supplies due to drought.

## **2.7 PROPOSED DROUGHT PERMIT DETAILS**

In order to protect essential public water supplies within Welsh Water's Tywyn / Aberdyfi WRZ in the event of a future severe drought, Welsh Water may need to make an application to NRW for a drought permit to temporarily abstract water from the Afon Dysynni. If granted, the drought permit would authorise a daily abstraction of up to 0.44Ml/d from a temporary river abstraction intake on the Afon Dysynni upstream of the Pont y Garth area. The following location for the temporary intake is proposed:

- NRW Depot (NGR: SH635 070)

Appropriate screening for eels and salmonids will be provided at the abstraction intake which complies with the Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009. Suitable additional hardstanding for water tankers would be provided at the selected location if required, and the water abstracted would be transferred by water tanker to the water treatment works at Penybont. Sandbags may be required to impound water at the abstraction intake, however these would not be extensive enough to cause an obstruction across the river. Welsh Water will apply for a Flood Risk Activity Permit for this activity. Details of the existing and proposed drought permit abstraction at Afon Dysynni are presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Afon Dysynni Existing and Proposed Drought Permit Abstraction**

<b>Abstraction Water Source</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Normal Abstraction</b>	<b>Proposed Drought Permit Abstraction</b>	<b>Benefit ML/d</b>
Afon Dysynni	SH 635 070	Welsh Water does not currently abstract any water from the Afon Dysynni.	The proposed drought permit would involve a daily abstraction of up to 0.44ML/d from a temporary intake on the Afon Dysynni in the Pont y Garth area.	0.44 ML/d

[Note: it will probably be necessary to remove the NGR for any public domain version]

## **2.8 DROUGHT PERMIT PROGRAMME**

Drought permits may remain in force for a period of up to six months, and they can be extended for up to a further six months.

Prevailing weather conditions and rainfall in the intervening period may delay the requirement for applications, or even result in no requirement to apply. A permit may be granted but not actually implemented if weather conditions improve or, equally, the permit may only be partially implemented.

## **2.9 DROUGHT PERMIT BASELINE**

It is important for the assessment to establish the environmental "baseline" conditions that would exist in drought conditions but in the absence of the drought permit being implemented. For the purposes of this assessment, the "without drought permit" baseline excludes any abstraction from the Afon Dysynni, as there is currently no abstraction licence in place. The assessed drought permit assumes a daily abstraction of 0.44ML/d from a temporary intake on the Afon Dysynni, at the NRW depot just upstream of Pont y Garth; water abstracted would be transferred by water tanker to Penybont water treatment works to support demand in the Tywyn Aberdyfi Water Resource Zone.

## **3 APPROACH**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The DPG states that the environmental report must include:

- i. the likely changes in flow, level, channel/riparian form and sediment due to implementing the action;
- ii. the features that are sensitive to these changes;
- iii. potential impacts on sensitive features;
- iv. a plan of baseline, in-drought and post-drought monitoring; and
- v. mitigation or compensation measures that may be required

Items i and ii above were subject to an initial screening process as part of the scoping exercise. Section 3.2 below describes the approach taken. This has provided the relevant study area and a list of features scoped into the environmental assessment which are the subject of this EAR.

Section 3.3 describes how the environmental assessment has been undertaken, including discussion of the general approach, guidance used, provision of data, assessment methodologies and consideration of mitigation and monitoring. Limitations to the environmental assessment are described in Section 3.4, 4 and 5.

To set the context of the studies, it should be noted that EAR considers the environmental impacts of implementing a drought permit during the worst environmental conditions (natural drought) that the permit could be implemented in.

In accordance with the DPG and the Habitats Regulations, the assessment considers how the proposed drought permit may affect the environment in combination with the effects of other existing abstraction licences, environment permits and other plans. This includes assessment of the potential cumulative effects of the following:

- Welsh Water's existing abstraction licences that operate within the hydrological zone of influence of the drought option, as well as other abstraction and discharge consents
- Assessment of cumulative impacts of the drought permit with other Welsh Water supply side and drought permit / order options within the hydrological zone of influence (including both intra- and inter- zone options)
- Other plans and projects of relevance, including:
  - Welsh Water's WRMP schemes which are scheduled to be implemented and become operational within the time period of the revised Drought Plan (i.e. before 2025)

- Drought options from other neighbouring water company Drought Plans, Natural Resource Wales Drought Plans
- National Policy Statements for Wastewater and Renewable Energy Infrastructure.

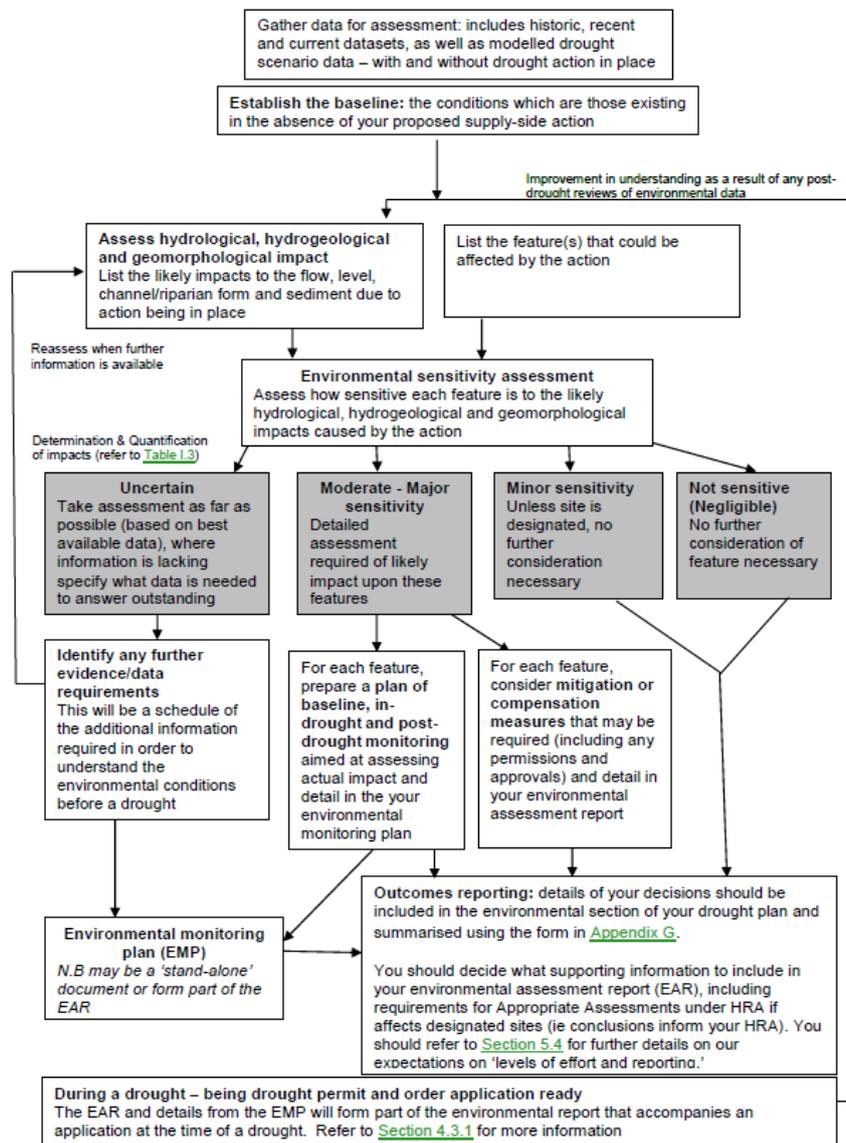
This is discussed further in Section 7.

### 3.2 APPROACH TO SCREENING AND SCOPING

#### 3.2.1 Screening

Screening was undertaken using the DPG; specifically Section 5 and Appendix I. Figure 2 of the DPG (replicated in **Figure 3.1** below) identifies the environmental impact activities required.

**Figure 3.1 Environmental Impact Activities Identified in the Drought Plan Guideline**



The screening fulfils the requirement to “Assess how sensitive each feature is to the likely hydrological, hydrogeological and geomorphological impacts caused by the action”. Stage 1 (hydrological impact) fulfils the requirement to “List the likely impacts to the flow, level, channel/riparian form and sediment due to action being in place”. Stage 2 (environmental sensitivity) fulfils the requirement to “list the feature(s) that could be affected by the action” and to “Assess how sensitive each feature is to the likely hydrological, hydrogeological and geomorphological impacts caused by the action”

**It is important to acknowledge the basis of the assessment; i.e. impacts of drought permit implementation should be considered in the context of what would occur without drought permit implementation (see Sections 2.2, 2.7 and 2.9).**

The approach to undertaking Stages 1 and 2 is described below.

### ***Stage 1 – Hydrological and Hydrogeological Impact***

Consideration is required (by the DPG) of the likely impacts on the hydrology, hydrogeology and geomorphology of every river reach, wetland or lake area influenced by the proposed drought management action, specifically:

- identify the drought conditions which trigger the proposed action;
- identify any changes that the action is likely to bring about, specifying their length, severity and location in relation to existing natural and artificial features;
- describe the likely conditions in the absence of the proposed action;
- describe how the likely conditions would differ with the action in place compared to the same (or analogous) watercourse under natural conditions; and
- identify the extent of the area affected by the planned actions.

The hydrogeological and hydrological information is used together with information on the other environmental features in the study area from Stage 2 - Environmental Sensitivity (see below) to identify the environmental risk of implementing the drought permit.

Although the DPG informs the hydrometric data to be used as part of environmental features for consideration within the environmental assessment (see Box 1 Appendix I of the DPG), it does not provide a methodology for identifying the hydrological impact. A bespoke assessment has therefore been undertaken.

The full hydrological assessment approach is set out in **Appendix A**.

The output from these studies provides an understanding of the scale of change in the hydrological characteristics as a result of implementing the drought permit. Where

changes have been identified, the potential significance of adverse or beneficial impacts has been assessed.

Quantitative and qualitative measures have been used to grade the impacts on surface waters. The assessment has identified the potential severity of impact based on the following criteria:

- **Positive or Negative Impact** – all impacts are considered to be negative unless otherwise stated in the feature assessment.
- **Extent** – the extent of the impact is covered as part of the magnitude consideration.
- **Magnitude** – the magnitude of the impact is identified as:
  - *High*: There is a long-term large-scale (i.e. catchment) change in the physical environment.
  - *Medium*: There is a short-term large-scale change or long-term short-scale (i.e. reach) change in the physical environment, however, no changes in the overall integrity of the physical environment.
  - *Low*: There is a short-term small-scale change in the physical environment, but its overall integrity is not impacted.
  - *Negligible*: No perceptible change in the physical environment.
- **Duration** – the duration of impact is considered to be for 6 months, which is the duration for which a drought option is implemented, unless otherwise stated.
- **Reversibility** – all hydrological impacts are considered to be reversible.
- **Timing and Frequency** – the drought option could be implemented at any point in the year. The assessment is based upon the operation of a single drought permit, with subsequent applications for a drought permit required to consider cumulative effects of multiple drought permit.
- **Probability** – all impacts are considered to be probable, unless otherwise stated.

The hydrological impact assessment is described fully in **Appendix B**.

**Section 4 provides a summary of the hydrology and physical environment assessment as a result of implementing a drought permit for abstraction from the Afon Dysynni.**

### ***Stage 2 - Environmental Sensitivity***

With the extent and level of flow impact mapped, using GIS and other data sources, potentially sensitive receptors (sites / features) located within the extents of impact have been identified. Potentially sensitive features investigated in the screening have been drawn from Box 1 in Appendix I of the DPG. These include:

- designated biodiversity sites (Local Nature Reserve (LNR), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Marine Protected Areas, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), SSSI, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar) and Environment (Wales) Act Section 7 species / habitats which are located on or within 500m of the impacted reaches;
- protected species;
- ecological communities (fish, bryophytes & lichen, macro-invertebrates, macrophytes, algae) and, where identified, Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of designated waterbodies which contain the impacted reaches;
- invasive non-native species;
- sensitive ecological features as advised by NRW;
- wider features which should be taken into account in determining the potential impacts of drought option implementation – specifically socio-economic & health, amenity & aesthetics, recreation, navigation, architectural & archaeological heritage.

Each of the identified sensitive receptors within the extent of impact have been listed, alongside a brief summary of their potential susceptibility to flow impacts. For designated sites, this has included an indication as to whether the sites have water dependent qualifying interests.

The environmental sensitivity of each site has been identified according to the ecological and nature conservation interests of the area and, in particular, the proximity of and / or connectivity with the designated protected area. Each site has been assessed according to whether the extent of hydrological influence includes or is considered to affect a designated or protected site. Designated or protected sites outside the extent of hydrological influence are considered not to be influenced by the drought permit.

The outcome of Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the screening exercise are presented in Sections 4 and 5 respectively.

### **3.2.2 Scope**

The screening exercise establishes the study area for the Afon Dysynni drought permit together with identification of relevant, sensitive environmental features within those study areas (based on the risk of them being impacted by the drought permit during the period of its operation).

As set out in **Figure 3.1**, the environmental sensitivity screening identifies the outcome for each listed feature. Four outcomes are possible from the screening: uncertain; moderate-major sensitivity; minor sensitivity; not sensitive (negligible);

and identifies appropriate next steps. Sections 4.2 and 5.2 present the findings which show that a number of features were identified as either: 1) uncertain; 2) moderate-major sensitivity; or 3) minor sensitivity in a designated site and in accordance with the DPG are features for which further assessment work will be required. These features alone form the scope of monitoring, environmental assessment, and consideration of mitigation actions.

The DPG states that environmental assessment, mitigation and / or monitoring is not required for features where screening has identified a minor (unless a site is designated) or negligible impact. However, the requirement for assessment, monitoring and / or mitigation has been reviewed on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, mitigation and / or monitoring has been recommended where minor impacts are identified, where considered appropriate on a precautionary basis.

### **3.3 APPROACH TO ASSESSING IMPACTS, MITIGATION AND MONITORING**

#### **3.3.1 General Approach**

The assessment approach is in accordance with legislation, national regulations and guidance, including:

- NRW (2017) Water Company Drought Plan Technical Guideline (DPG)
- Welsh Ministers (2017) The Drought Plan (Wales) Direction
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2004) Guidelines for Environmental Assessment
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland<sup>3</sup>
- UKWIR (2007, updated 2012) Strategic Environmental Assessment – Guidance for Water Resources Management Plans and Drought Plans. Prepared by Cascade Consulting
- Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)
- Council Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds
- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat , December 1975
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

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<sup>3</sup> CIEEM, Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal. September 2018.

- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

All aspects of the drought permit of potential environmental significance are considered in the environmental assessment.

The DPG states that a water company should clearly show what evidence and data have been used in decision making, that uncertainties should be identified, and which additional data requirements are provided for through the environmental monitoring plan.

In accordance with the DPG the approach to the assessment addresses the following: i) potential effects on each sensitive receptor; ii) definitions for impacts (adverse / beneficial); iii) the data requirements; iv) assessment methodology (including the treatment of uncertainty where the complete data requirements are not available).

This EAR presents the environmental baseline, i.e. habitats and environmental pressures (including flow and water quality) in the study identified zone of hydrological influence without the drought permit in place, utilising a description of the catchment, geomorphology, anthropogenic features and water quality. Key changes to the physical environment as a result of implementing the drought permit have been identified and described and, where appropriate, this information is used to frame and support the assessments of features which have been scoped in further to the screening and scoping exercise (see Section 3.2).

### 3.3.2 Assessment Methodologies

The aim of the Environmental Assessment is to provide:

- A clear summary of the outcome of each assessment (per feature) from which NRW can readily identify the significance of the impact when determining the drought permit application
- Identification of those predicted impacts which are to be taken forward to consider additional monitoring and mitigation actions.

The assessment considers the environmental impacts of implementing the drought permit against baseline operating conditions in advance of drought permit implementation. Environmental sensitivity has been assessed considering the context of the timing of drought permit implementation. **It is important to acknowledge the basis of the assessment; i.e. impacts of drought permit implementation are assessed against what would occur without drought permit implementation.**

Other abstractors, including other water company abstractions, are features that have been reviewed within the assessment. This has been undertaken to determine whether other abstractors could potentially be affected by changes to surface water flows and

levels as a result of implementation of the drought permit.

### **3.3.3 Mitigation and Monitoring**

Section 5.3 of the DPG identifies the specific requirements for mitigation of serious impacts on the environment as a result of implementing a drought management measure. The assessments undertaken in this EAR confirm the features requiring consideration of mitigation and appropriate monitoring triggering mitigation. Appropriate mitigation actions identified are both available and practicable.

The DPG also identifies the specific requirements for monitoring. The assessments undertaken in this EAR inform the features requiring consideration for monitoring prior to, during, or after implementation of the drought permit.

The mitigation and monitoring proposals (see Sections 6 and 9) will act as a safeguard that responds and is responsive to both predicted and unpredicted drought impacts. Future data collection and monitoring can then be focused to identify the aquatic ecosystem interaction to better quantify the potential impacts where gaps in the evidence base are identified and ensure the appropriate targeting of monitoring and mitigation response. The EMP will need to be finalised in agreement with NRW.

## **3.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT AND UNCERTAINTIES**

The DPG states that a water company should clearly show what evidence and data have been used in decision making, that uncertainties should be identified, and which additional data requirements are provided for through the environmental monitoring plan.

The assessment presented in this document draws on available information from surveys and investigations undertaken by Welsh Water, NRW, as well as other bodies over a number of years. Reference has also been made to wider studies from published and grey literature, i.e. academic literature that is not formally published, where appropriate.

Specific details are provided on the quality of the data collected and used in the assessment. Where uncertainties remain with respect to the quantification and prediction of impacts, the limitations and any assumptions made are included in the relevant technical sections (Sections 4 and 5).

Overall, it is considered that the conclusions are based on information that is robust and valid at the time of writing. However, it should be noted that this EAR would be updated to support any future actual application, including a review of data.

## **4 AFON DYSYNNI DROUGHT PERMIT - HYDROLOGY AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Consideration of hydrology and the water physical environment sets the context for the potential range of environmental effects of the drought permit. **Appendix B** sets out an assessment of the potential impacts on the physical environment of Afon Dysynni during the period of implementation of the drought permit. The “without drought permit” baseline is set out in Section 2.9.

The water physical environment assessment includes consideration of hydrology and hydrodynamics; geomorphology; and water quality. The assessment has three key objectives:

1. It is used to “list likely changes in flow, level, channel/riparian form and sediment due to implementing the action’ as required by the DPG and set out in Figure 2 of the DPG
2. It is used to support the screening and assessment of sensitive features (including ecological features and designated sites) as required by the DPG and set out in Section 5 of this report
3. Where sensitive features are the physical environment itself, it provides supporting technical information for their screening and assessment.

Each of these are summarised below.

### **4.2 SUMMARY OF STAGE 1 SCREENING**

This fulfils the DPG requirements of Stage 1 of the screening of potential drought permit impacts, identifying the likely changes in flow/ level regime due to implementing the drought permit. The specific requirements of the DPG are summarised as:

- identify any changes that the drought permit is likely to bring about, specifying their length, severity and location in relation to existing natural and artificial features (e.g. flow, water level, channel dynamics and sediment changes);
- describe the likely conditions in the absence of the drought permit;
- describe how the likely conditions would differ with the drought permit in place compared to the same (or analogous) watercourse under natural conditions; and

- identify the extent of the area affected by your planned actions.

These requirements are addressed in the following sections.

1. The perceived extent of potential impact:

The study area (see **Figure 2.3**) is identified as the Afon Dysynni from the temporary intake located at the NRW depot near Pont y Garth downstream to the confluence with the Afon Fathew.

2. The nature and duration of the potential impact:

A description of the likely conditions with the drought permit in place, in comparison to the baseline conditions (absence of the proposed action) is provided in **Appendix B**. Given the conditions of the proposed drought permit, the key areas for the assessment of the physical environment have been identified as:

- Change in river flows of the Afon Dysynni.

The **Appendix B** assessment has been summarised in **Table 4.1** in terms of the magnitude and duration of each of these potential physical environment impacts.

3. The length of the potential impact:

The **Appendix B** assessment has been summarised in **Table 4.1** in terms of the timing of each of the potential physical environment impacts. In line with the precautionary principle, the assessment of impacts on environmental features has considered potential impacts of drought permit implementation at any time of year.

#### **4.3 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The potential changes to the physical environment (water quality and geomorphology) due to implementation of the drought permit are summarised in **Table 4.1**. These impacts are presented in detail in **Appendix B**.

**Table 4.1 Summary of Potential Hydrodynamic and Water Quality Impacts of the Drought Permit**

<b>Afon Dysynni (Reach 1)</b>	
Flows in the Afon Dysynni <i>Negligible impacts</i> <i>Negligible impacts on water quality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of up to 1.7% in river flow, with negligible impacts on wetted width / wetted depth of river channel</li> </ul>

**4.3.1 Support to the Screening and Assessment of Sensitive Features**

The assessment included in **Appendix B** has provided information to support the screening and assessment of sensitive features in Section 5. This includes information on short and long term (acute and chronic) direct and indirect, cumulative, and permanent and temporary effects. The assessment is also specific on the difference between the drought permit impacts and the baseline condition without a drought permit in place.

**4.3.2 Supporting Technical Information for Assessment of any Physical Environment Sensitive Features**

As described in Section 5, several sensitive features relate to the physical environment, rather than ecology or human interaction (e.g. landscape, recreation). The assessment included in **Appendix B** has provided supporting technical information for their screening and assessment in Section 5.

## **5 AFON DYSYNNI DROUGHT PERMIT ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In compliance with the DPG, environmental sensitivity screening has been undertaken within the zone of hydrological influence. As set out in **Box 1** above, further environmental assessment is neither required nor included for features where screening has identified a minor (where there are no environmentally designated sites) or negligible impact.

Points of interest referred to throughout the text in Section 5 are indicated on **Figure 2.3**.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF STAGE 2 SCREENING AND SCOPING**

#### **5.2.1 Designated Sites and Other Sensitive Fauna and Flora**

In accordance with the DPG, **Table 5.1** identifies designated biodiversity sites (including LNR, NNR, SSSI, SAC, SPA), Environment (Wales) Act Section 7 species / habitats and other sensitive receptors that could be affected by the drought permit. Susceptibility to the flow / level impacts resulting from the drought permit (see Section 4) is identified according to whether interest features of the site or the species are water dependent. Sensitivity is then determined according to professional judgment based on susceptibility and the level of hydrological impact at the location.

**Table 5.1 Designated Sites and Other Sensitive Receptors Within the Zone of Influence of the Afon Dysynni Drought Permit**

Site/Feature and designation	Hydrological Impact at Location (Major, Moderate, Minor)	Susceptibility to flow and level impacts	Sensitivity (Uncertain, Moderate/Major, Minor, Negligible)	Further Consideration Required (Yes/No)
<b>Afon Dysynni (Reach 1)</b>				
Craigyr Aderyn (Bird's Rock) SPA/SSSI	Negligible	Craigyr Aderyn SSSI/SPA is an important habitat for Chough <i>Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax</i> , which are present throughout the year. The negligible hydrological impact is not anticipated to cause any deterioration of the designation and qualifying species.	Negligible	No
Broadwater SSSI	Negligible	The site is designated for its tidal lagoon, which is a coastal habitat of considerable biological interest. It is comprised of a shingle spit, mudflats, pools, reedbeds and ditches. The negligible hydrological impact and distance downstream of this site is not anticipated to cause any deterioration to the designated features of the SSSI.	Negligible	No
Benthic macroinvertebrate communities	Negligible	The negligible hydrological impact is not anticipated to reduce the availability of habitats or lead to exposure of benthic macroinvertebrate habitats.	Negligible	No
Macrophytes	Negligible	The negligible hydrological impact is not anticipated to reduce the availability of macrophyte habitats.	Negligible	No
<b>Notable Species – Fish</b> Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> Sea trout	Negligible	Atlantic salmon and sea trout are known to occur in the Afon Dysynni. The negligible hydrological impact is not anticipated to impact fish populations.	Negligible	No
<b>Notable Species – Birds</b> Chough <i>Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax</i>  Coot; Sedge Warbler; Mallard; Teal; Wigeon; Pintail; Red Breasted; Mergansers; Long tailed Duck; Little Grebe; Curlew; Oystercatchers; Herring; Common and black-headed gulls	Negligible	Several bird species are present within Craigyr Aderyn SSSI/SPA and Broadwater SSSI. The negligible hydrological impact is not anticipated to cause any deterioration to habitats or direct impacts on these notable bird species.	Negligible	No
Invasive flora and fauna – Japanese knotweed <i>Fallopia japonica</i> Giant hogweed <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i> Himalayan balsam <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	Negligible	Invasive plant species utilise flow of the watercourse for dispersal but are not reliant on it. Implementation of the drought permit is unlikely to increase the risk of dispersal of invasive plant species.	Negligible	No

<b>Site/Feature and designation</b>	<b>Hydrological Impact at Location (Major, Moderate, Minor)</b>	<b>Susceptibility to flow and level impacts</b>	<b>Sensitivity (Uncertain, Moderate/Major, Minor, Negligible)</b>	<b>Further Consideration Required (Yes/No)</b>
Landscape and visual amenity	Negligible	Landscape and visual amenity impacts may be visible from footpaths but given the negligible hydrological impact, no adverse effects on landscape or visual amenity are anticipated.	Negligible	No
Recreation	Negligible	Recreational activities in the area include angling, walking and canoeing. Changes to river flow are expected to be negligible, and therefore the changes are not anticipated to impact aspects of water-based recreation.	Negligible	No
Archaeology	Negligible	1 scheduled ancient monument identified in the impacted reach – a medieval motte. Given the negligible hydrological impact, no adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of the drought permit.	Negligible	No

### 5.2.2 WFD Waterbody Status

**Table 5.2** identifies the WFD status classification of the WFD waterbodies that may be impacted by implementation of the drought permit. Waterbodies classified as overall high / good status / potential, and / or high / good ecological status for fish or macroinvertebrates are likely to be more sensitive to flow impacts. **Table 5.2** summarises the risk to WFD status and indicates where further assessment has been carried out as reported in Section 5.3 below.

**Table 5.2 WFD Status Classifications**

Waterbody Name	Lower Afon Dysynni (GB110064048440)	
<b>Hydrological Impact at Location (Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible)</b>	Negligible	
Heavily Modified Waterbody (Y/N)	Yes	
RBMP Cycle	RBMP2 (2015) <sup>4</sup>	2018 Cycle 2 Interim Classification <sup>5</sup>
Overall Biological	Moderate	Moderate
Fish	High	High
Macrophytes	Not classified	Not classified
Phytobenthos	Not classified	Not classified
Macro-invertebrates	Good	Not classified
Total P/ Phosphate	High	High
Ammonia	High	High
Dissolved Oxygen	High	High
pH	High	Moderate
<b>Sensitivity (Uncertain, Moderate/ Major, Minor, Not sensitive)</b>	Negligible	
<b>Further Consideration Required (Y/N)</b>	No	

### 5.3 FEATURES ASSESSMENT

The hydrological impact of the drought permit has been assessed as negligible. Screening has not identified any environment features for which environmental assessment is required. No environmental impacts have, therefore, been identified for any of the features identified in screening (see Section 5.2).

<sup>4</sup> NRW (2017) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2hsDbbdxztZHItRU9lNkg1YWw/view>.

<sup>5</sup> NRW (2018) [https://drive.google.com/file/d/14w17jLo5sNuToVELqMCK\\_yc6DdHU7STb/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14w17jLo5sNuToVELqMCK_yc6DdHU7STb/view)

## **6 AFON DYSYNNI DROUGHT PERMIT– MITIGATION**

The hydrological impact of the drought permit has been assessed as negligible. Screening has not identified any environment features for which environmental assessment is required and, therefore, no mitigation is required during drought permit implementation.

## 7 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

In accordance with the DPG and the Habitats Regulations, consideration has been given to how the proposed drought permit may affect the environment in combination with the effects of existing abstraction licences, environmental permits and other plans. This includes assessment of the potential cumulative effects of the following:

- Welsh Water's existing abstraction licences that operate within the hydrological zone of influence of the drought option, as well as other abstraction licences and discharge permits, as identified in NRW Review of Consents reports;
- Assessment of cumulative impacts of the drought permit with other Welsh Water supply-side and drought permit options within the hydrological zone of influence (including both intra- and inter- zone options);
- Other plans and projects of relevance, including;
  - Any Welsh Water WRMP schemes which are scheduled to be implemented and become operational within the time period of the Drought Plan (i.e. before 2025).
  - Drought supply-side and drought order / permit options from NRW Drought Plans.
  - National Policy Statements for Wastewater and Renewable Energy Infrastructure.
- Environmental monitoring before, during and after drought permit implementation (see Section 9).

If a drought permit application is progressed in the future, the potential for cumulative effects will be reviewed and revised to reflect any changes which are relevant to the timing of the drought permit specified in the application.

### ***Welsh Water's existing abstraction licences and other abstraction licences and discharge permits***

No cumulative effects of implementing the Afon Dysynni abstraction drought permit with other drought order / permit schemes have been identified.

### ***Other relevant Welsh Water drought permit / orders***

No drought order / permit schemes identified with cumulative impacts.

### ***Welsh Water WRMP schemes***

No WRMP schemes identified with cumulative impacts.

### ***NRW Drought Plans***

No cumulative impacts of options in NRW Drought Plan with a drought permit at Afon Dysynni are anticipated. However, this should be reviewed at time of future application for a drought permit.

### ***National Policy Statements for Wastewater and Renewable Energy Infrastructure***

No cumulative schemes have been identified for assessment.

## **8 AFON DYSYNNI DROUGHT PERMIT - SUMMARY OF RESIDUAL IMPACTS**

The residual impact on environmental features is dependent on the effects observed during environmental monitoring, and the mitigation measures that are taken forward and their timely and effective application once the trigger for their need has been identified.

At this stage, no mitigation measures have been identified as required as the hydrological influence of the drought permit has been assessed as negligible (see Section 4).

## **9 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PLAN (EMP)**

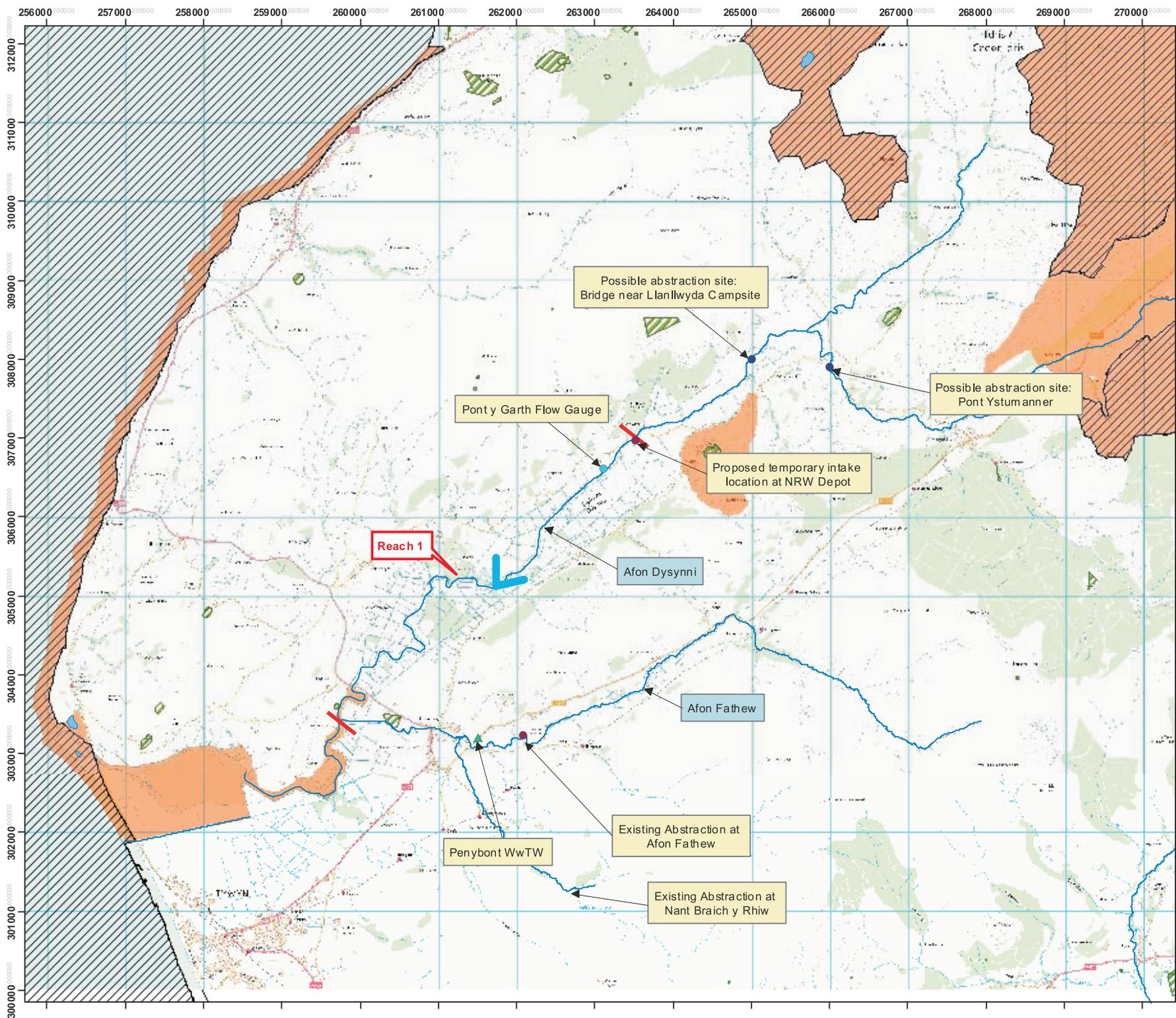
The hydrological impact of the drought permit at Afon Dysynni has been assessed as negligible. Screening has not identified any environment features for which environmental assessment is required and, therefore, no feature specific monitoring will be required.

However, it is recommended that current hydrological monitoring should continue to be carried out during the development of drought conditions and implementation of the drought permit, in order to monitor the adherence (or otherwise) of the river system to that expected from the baseline assessment in Section 4. Such monitoring is mapped on **Figure 9.1**, and should include:

- daily Welsh Water abstractions from Brynecrug intake on the Afon Fathew;
- daily Welsh Water abstractions from Braich y Rhiw intake on Nant Braich y Rhiw;
- daily Welsh Water monitoring of the hands-off flow requirement on Nant Braich y Rhiw;
- daily river flow at NRW's permanent Pont y Garth flow gauge on the Afon Dysynni.

Additionally, the following are recommended if a drought permit is actually implemented:

- daily Welsh Water abstractions from the temporary intake on the Afon Dysynni;
- periodic (up to 3 occasions) spot flow gauging at low flow conditions (flows less than or equal to  $Q_{95}$  at Pont y Garth) on the Afon Dysynni upstream of the selected temporary intake location.



- Legend**
- Flow Gauge
  - Abstraction
  - Potential abstraction
  - ▲ Penybont WwTW
  - Hydrological Reach
  - Water Courses
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Direction of Flow



Scale: 1:45,000  
 Note: All locations are approximate  
 This drawing incorporates Ordnance Survey Information  
 © Crown copyright and database rights 2019

Project Title: Welsh Water Drought Plan Environmental Assessment

Figure Title: Environmental Monitoring: 8201-1 Tankering raw water from Dysynni

Figure Number: Figure 9.1	Date: February 2019
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## 10 CONCLUSIONS

This EAR provides an assessment of the potential environmental impacts relating to the implementation of the Afon Dysynni drought permit. If granted and implemented, the drought permit would enable Welsh Water to abstract 0.44Ml/d from a temporary intake of the Afon Dysynni upstream of the Pont y Garth area. Such usage is not authorised by the existing abstraction licence and a drought permit would be required.

The timing of the increase in abstraction rate is most likely to occur during the summer and autumn period.

The scope of the assessment has been defined by an impact screening and scoping exercise. In accordance with the DPG, the screening exercise involved two stages, a hydrological impact assessment (Stage 1) and the identification of the environmental features that could be affected by the drought permit (Stage 2).

The hydrological impact assessment identified a **negligible** impact on flows in the Afon Dysynni.

The DPG states that environmental assessment is not required for features where screening has identified a minor (if there are no designated environmental sites) or negligible impact. Screening has not identified any environment features for which environmental assessment is required. No environmental impacts greater than negligible have, therefore, been identified for any of the features identified in the screening exercise. In light of this and in accordance with the DPG no mitigation or feature specific monitoring is identified. However, hydrological monitoring has been recommended during the development of drought conditions and implementation of the drought permit, in order to monitor the adherence (or otherwise) of the river system to that expected from the assessment presented in this EAR.

No cumulative effects of implementing the drought permit with other existing licences, consents and plans are currently anticipated. However, this should be reviewed at the time of any future application for a drought permit at Afon Dysynni.

In summary, it has been concluded that the environmental effects on river flows and ecology of implementing a drought permit at Afon Dysynni, over and above those conditions that already exist under "normal", i.e. licensed, baseline conditions, with the onset of a natural drought, would be **negligible**.



# **APPENDIX A**

# **HYDROLOGY AND HYDROGEOLOGY**

# **METHODOLOGY**

## A.1 HYDROLOGICAL AND HYDROGEOLOGY IMPACT METHODOLOGY (STAGE 1 SCREENING)

Consideration is required (by the DPG<sup>1</sup>) of the likely changes in flow / level regime due to implementing the drought management action, specifically:

- the perceived extent of potential impact
- the nature and duration of the potential impact
- the timing of the potential impact.

The hydrogeological and hydrological information is used together with information on the other environmental features in the study area from Stage 2 - Environmental Sensitivity (see Section 3.2.1 in main report) to identify the environmental risk of the drought order / permit.

Although the DPG informs the hydrometric data to be used as part of environmental features for consideration within the environmental assessment (see Box 1 Appendix H of the DPG), it does not provide a methodology for identifying the hydrological impact.

Cascade has developed a flexible approach<sup>2</sup> to identifying the spatial extent of the study area from hydrological information and characterising the hydrological impact within the study area, in terms of the scale, nature, duration and timing of impacts, although this is only appropriate to apply to reaches that do not dry naturally. A hydrological methodology for watercourses that naturally dry for part of the year is also presented that characterises the hydrological impact within the study area, in terms of the scale, nature, duration and timing of impacts. These are presented below.

### Perennially flowing watercourse hydrological methodology

This methodology is applied to watercourses that flow throughout the year and that are potentially impacted on by the drought order / permit.

Core to this approach is the use of relevant long term flow statistics to inform the scale of hydrological impact and thereby delimit the zone of influence in the downstream river system. To determine these, potential reductions in flow resulting from implementation of the drought order / permit are compared with flows without the drought order / permit in place (i.e. the additional abstraction advocated by the drought order / permit over and above the existing abstraction). This helps to determine the scale of potential impact at any particular site/feature using the matrix in **Figure A.1** or **Figure A.2** depending on the altitude of the waterbody and whether it is classified as lowland or upland<sup>3</sup>. Where possible, the hydrological assessments presented in previous EMPs and EARS of the drought options have been used to

<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government / Defra / NRW / Environment Agency (2011). Water Company Drought Plan Guideline. June 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Hydrological impact approach used in previous drought plan environmental assessments for water companies including Thames Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities

<sup>3</sup> The River Basin Districts Typology, Standards and Groundwater threshold values (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Directions 2010. ISBN 978-0-85521-192-9.

The Directions set out the principles of classification of surface water and groundwater bodies, including the use of 80m above Ordnance Datum as the altitude that differentiates water quality requirements for upland and lowland biology. Where there are ambiguities, or thresholds are crossed, upland is assumed to apply to ensure a precautionary assessment.

help identify the spatial extent of the study area from hydrological information and characterising the hydrological impact within the study area.

**Figure A.1 Hydrological Assessment Matrix (Upland)**

		Summer Q99		
		<10%	10-25%	>25%
Summer Q95	<10%	Negligible	Minor	Moderate
	10-25%	Minor	Moderate	Major
	>25%	Moderate	Major	Major

**Figure A.2 Hydrological Assessment Matrix (Lowland)**

		Summer Q99		
		<10%	10-25%	>25%
Summer Q95	<20%	Negligible	Minor	Moderate
	20-50%	Minor	Moderate	Major
	>50%	Moderate	Major	Major

**Figure A.1** illustrates that at the time of implementation of a drought order / permit, upland river systems of relevance to each of these proposed options will exhibit high sensitivity to changes in low flow (represented by Q<sub>95</sub>, summer<sup>4</sup>) and very high sensitivity to changes in extreme low flow (represented by Q<sub>99</sub>, summer). As illustrated by **Figure A.2**, lowland rivers of relevance to each of these proposed options are considered to be less sensitive to reductions in summer low flows (summer Q<sub>95</sub>), but similarly sensitive to reductions in extreme summer low flows (summer Q<sub>99</sub>).

**Figures A.1** and **A.2** are appropriate for the assessment of hydrological impacts on low flow regimes in watercourses during the spring, summer and autumn. However, in some cases there is a need to assess the impacts of drought order schemes on watercourses during the winter. For example, a reduction in compensation release may remain in force during the winter high flow period, to increase the probability of reservoir refill prior to the following year’s spring/summer drawdown period. During the winter season, watercourses have relatively lower sensitivity to changes in low flow, and moderate sensitivity to changes in moderate flow. This can be reflected by the use of the matrices in **Figures A.3** and **A.4** for the assessment of drought order / permit schemes which are only likely to impact on a watercourse during the winter. The categorisation of impacts as negligible, minor, moderate or major is based on the percentage reduction in year round low flow (Q<sub>95</sub>) and year round median flow (Q<sub>50</sub>).

**Figure A.3 Hydrological Assessment Matrix (Upland / Winter)**

		Year round Q95		
		<10%	10-25%	>25%
Year round Q50	<10%	Negligible	Minor	Moderate
	10-25%	Minor	Moderate	Major
	>25%	Moderate	Major	Major

<sup>4</sup> Flow statistics indicate the proportion of days a flow is equalled or exceeded. Therefore Q<sub>95</sub> indicates flow equalled or exceeded on 95% of days in the measured record (equivalent to an average of 347 days per year)

**Figure A.4 Hydrological Assessment Matrix (Lowland / Winter)**

		Year round Q95		
		<10%	10-25%	>25%
Year round Q50	<20%	Negligible	Minor	Moderate
	20-50%	Minor	Moderate	Major
	>50%	Moderate	Major	Major

The matrices are used to identify 1) the overall study area – which extends downstream of the abstraction until the hydrological impact has reduced to negligible; 2) reaches with similar scales of impact within the overall study area; and 3) the scale of hydrological impact within each reach. Typically reaches have been delimited by the addition of flow from a significant tributary or discharge; although the similarity of geomorphological characteristics of the reach may also be important in reach specification. The matrices can be applied to a variety of upland or lowland catchments respectively including those dominated by groundwater, and can be applied until the tidal limit.

In addition to the information provided by summary flow statistics in the matrix, information on the timing, duration and relevant seasons of the drought order / permit impacts have been informed by licence details and river gauging data have also been used to characterise the likely nature of the drought order / permit impacts.

If the drought order / permit does not impact on the magnitude of low flows in a watercourse, but does cause changes in the duration of low flow periods (which can be quantified), then the matrix in **Figure A.5** may be appropriate. The assessment is based on the percentage increase in the number of days for which flow is at or below the low flow (Q95) value. Typically this would be the case when the low flow regime in a watercourse downstream of a reservoir is protected by a statutory compensation release from the reservoir, but the reservoir may be drawn down below top water level for longer periods due to increased direct abstraction under the drought order / permit conditions.

If low flows in a watercourse are adversely affected in both magnitude and duration, then the impacts on magnitude are always used to determine the significance of hydrological impacts, using the appropriate matrix from **Figures A.1 to A.4** inclusive. **Figure A.5** is only used when the impacts on low flows are on duration only.

**Figure A.5 Hydrological Assessment Matrix (Low Flow Duration)**

Percentage increase in low flow duration	Significance
<5%	Negligible
5-10%	Minor
10-25%	Moderate
>25%	Major

### Intermittently flowing watercourse hydrological methodology

This methodology is applied to watercourses, potentially impacted on by the drought order / permit, that flow for most of the time but seasonally or occasionally ceasing to flow in response to decreased water availability e.g. due to increased evapotranspiration or bed seepage. . Such watercourses are identified from previous investigations and available data. Examples of watercourses where this methodology would be applied include winter bournes or watercourses that dry along their route due to losses to underlying aquifers. The impact classification of this methodology is as follows:

- Major - If the drought order / permit resulted in sections drying that did not dry up anyway
- Moderate - If the drought order / permit resulted in sections drying earlier (by more than a week) and / or recovering later (by more than a week) and hence flow reduction occurring in the channel for more than a week
- Minor - If the drought order / permit resulted in sections drying earlier (up to a week) and/or recovering later (by up to a week) and hence flow reduction occurring in the channel for up to a week OR if the drought order / permit were a secondary flow driver (e.g. flow through gravels being primary cause of flow losses rather than the drought order / permit)
- Negligible - No significant impact

In addition to the derived classifications, information on the timing, duration and relevant seasons of the drought order / permit impacts have been informed by licence details, available data and findings of previous investigations. These have been used to characterise the likely nature of the drought order / permit impacts.

### Reservoir hydrological methodology

More recently Cascade has developed a similar approach to categorise the significance of hydrological impacts of drought order / permit operations on reservoirs. The assessment requires an estimate of the relative change in duration of reservoir drawdown (i.e. the period for which water in the reservoir is below top water level), and the percentage decrease in the minimum reservoir level reached during the drawdown period. These two parameters are then compared against the reservoir impacts hydrological assessment matrix in **Figure A.6**.

This approach would be a suitable method to assess the impacts of a drought order / permit which involves significant changes to the reservoir water level regime (that would not normally be experienced during a drought without any additional measures implemented). For example, a drought order / permit may involve increasing daily or annual licensed abstraction limits to allow an increased rate of direct abstraction from the reservoir. This may enable some or all of a reservoir's emergency storage volume to be utilised, but is likely to lead to both lower water levels and increased periods of time below top water level.

**Figure A.6 Hydrological Assessment Matrix (Reservoir Impacts)**

	% Increase in duration of reservoir drawdown			
% Decrease in minimum reservoir level	<5%	5-10%	10-25%	>25%
<5%	Negligible	Negligible	Minor	Moderate
5-10%	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major
10-25%	Minor	Moderate	Major	Major
>25%	Moderate	Major	Major	Major

Additional Considerations

For groundwater schemes, hydrogeological data, where available, has been reviewed to inform the study area and duration of any impacts (noting impacts on groundwater may extend beyond the six month period of drought order / permit implementation - see below). An increase in groundwater abstractions would lead to an increased cone of depression in groundwater levels for groundwater abstraction. This impact can affect other non-surface water receptors such as other wells, springs or groundwater dependent ecosystems. It could also mean that surface water impacts would extend upstream of the abstraction point or, in significant instances, to other watercourses some distance from the abstraction.

For groundwater abstractions, the impact of a drought order / permit could extend beyond the six month period (time limited) of abstraction depending on the local hydrogeology of the area. During drought situations, where there is limited recharge to the aquifer system, the abstraction can be mainly at the expense of groundwater stored in the aquifer. This can, in the long run, delay groundwater level recovery and have a knock on effect on baseflow contributions to watercourses. Flows could, therefore, be reduced for longer than the six month period during which the drought order / permit could be implemented and, as such, has been considered as part of the assessment described in this report.



# **APPENDIX B**

## **HYDROLOGY AND**

### **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT**

## **B1 INTRODUCTION**

This appendix assesses the potential impacts on the physical environment of the Afon Dysynni river catchment during the period of implementation of the Afon Dysynni drought permit.

For the purposes of this assessment, the “without drought permit” baseline excludes any abstraction from the Afon Dysynni, as there is currently no abstraction licence in place. The assessed drought permit assumes a daily abstraction of up to 1.0Ml/d from a temporary intake in the vicinity of the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) depot near Pont y Garth on the Afon Dysynni; water abstracted would be transferred by tanker to Penybont water treatment works to support demand in the Tywyn Aberdyfi Water Resource Zone.

### **B.1.1 Welsh Water’s Existing Operations**

Welsh Water does not currently abstract any water from the Afon Dysynni. Water to supply the Tywyn Aberdyfi Water Resources Zone (WRZ) is abstracted from Afon Fathew, at Bryncreug (NGR: SH621032), and from Nant Braich y Rhiw (NGR: SH626013), for treatment at Penybont water treatment works (WTW). Nant Braich y Rhiw is a tributary of the Afon Fathew, which itself is a tributary of the Afon Dysynni. The confluence of Afon Fathew with Afon Dysynni is some 6.7km downstream from Pont y Garth, and therefore the proposed drought permit is not expected to have any impact on the flows in these two tributaries or Welsh Water’s operations there.

Average demand in the Tywyn Aberdyfi WRZ in 2012/13 was 1.34Ml/d, with a peak week demand of 1.93Ml/d<sup>1</sup>. The treatment capacity of Penybont WTW is 2.6Ml/d.

### **B.1.2 Welsh Water’s Proposed Drought Permit Operations**

The proposed drought permit would involve a daily abstraction of up to 1.0Ml/d from a temporary river abstraction intake located upstream of the Pont y Garth gauging station on the Afon Dysynni. The following location for the temporary intake is proposed:

- Natural Resources Wales Depot (NGR: SH635070)

Appropriate screening for eels and salmonids will be provided at the abstraction intake which complies with the Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009. Suitable additional hardstanding for tankers would be provided at the selected location if required and the water abstracted would be transferred by tanker to the water treatment works at Penybont (NGR: SH615 032). The study area is shown on **Figure B1.1**.

The physical environment includes consideration of hydrology and hydrodynamics; geomorphology; and water quality. The assessment has three key objectives:

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Water (2015) Drought Plan 2015: Appendix 1 – Water Resource Zone Summaries.

1. It is used to “list the likely impacts to the flow, level, channel/riparian form and sediment due to action being in place” as required by the DPG<sup>2</sup> and set out in Figure 2 of the DPG.
2. It is used to support the screening and assessment of sensitive features (including ecological features and designated sites) as required by the DPG and set out in Section 5 of this report.
3. Where sensitive features are the physical environment itself, it provides supporting technical information for their screening and assessment.

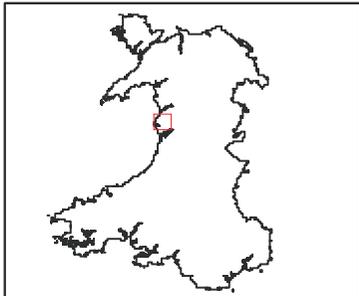
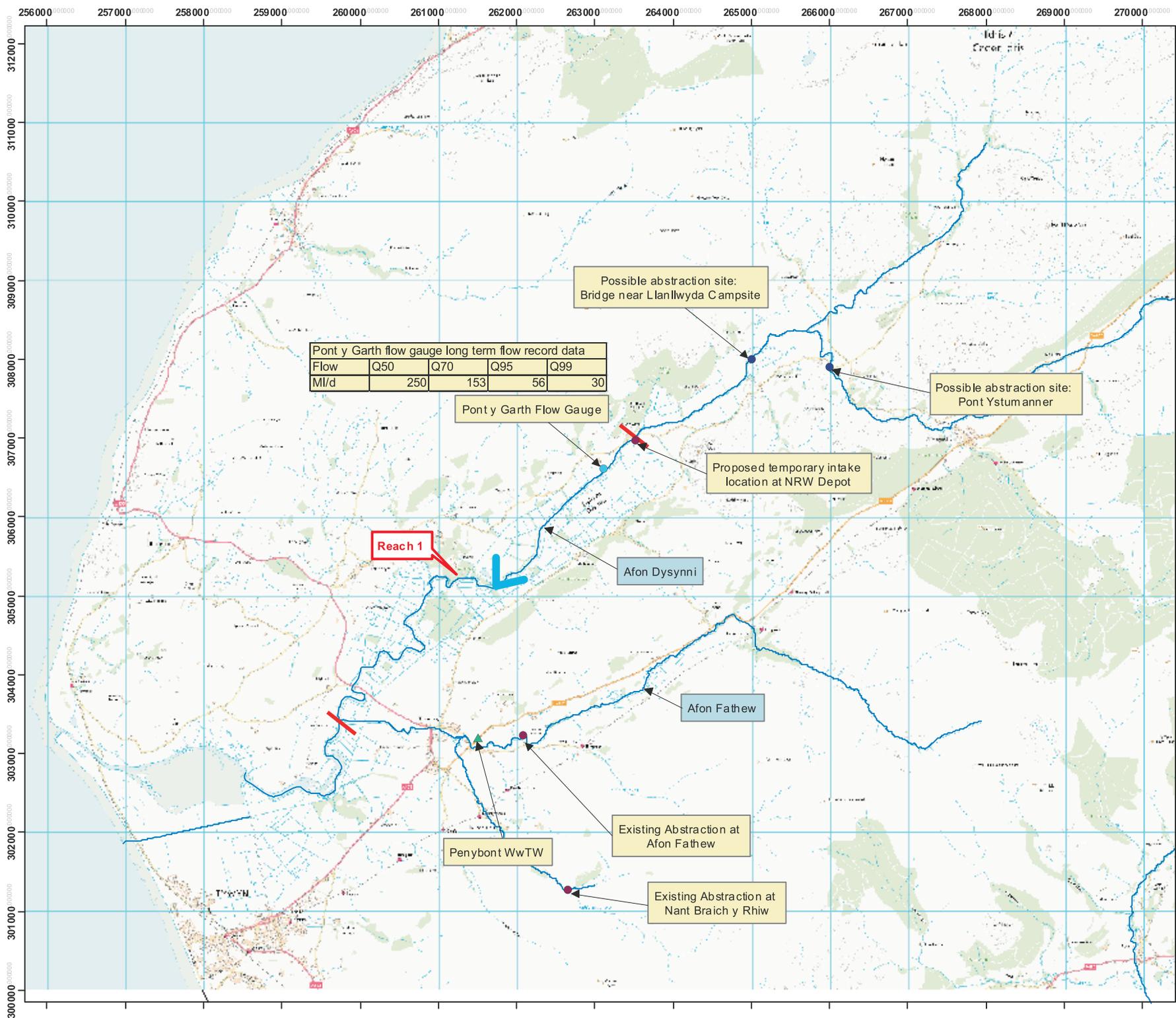
This appendix is set out in the following sections:

- Section B.2 Hydrological Impact
- Section B.3 Physical Environment Assessment
- Section B.4 Physical Environment Impact Summary
- Section B.5 Cumulative Impacts.

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<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources Wales (2017) *Water Company Drought Plan Technical Guideline*. Available at <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/684414/final-wc-drought-plan-guidance-2017.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=131656713580000000>, Accessed 04 February 2019.

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**Legend**

- Flow Gauge
- Abstraction
- Potential abstraction
- ▲ Penybont WwTW
- Hydrological Reach
- Water Courses
- Direction of Flow



Scale: 1:45,000  
 Note: All locations are approximate  
 This drawing incorporates Ordnance Survey Information  
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Project Title: Welsh Water Drought Plan Environmental Assessment

Figure Title: Hydrological Overview: 8201-1 Tankering raw water from Dysynni

Figure Number: Figure B1.1 Date: February 2019

## **B2 HYDROLOGICAL IMPACT**

### **B.2.1 Reference Conditions**

#### ***B.2.1.1 Catchment Overview***

##### *Afon Dysynni*

The Afon Dysynni has its source at Llyn Mwyngil (Tal-y-Llyn Lake), on the southern slopes of Cadair Idris, and drains a predominantly upland catchment of 75.1km<sup>2</sup> within the southern area of Snowdonia National Park<sup>3</sup>. It flows for a distance of 30.1km through the small towns of Abergynolwyn and Brynchrug and then into Cardigan Bay at the northern end of the small coastal town of Tywyn.

The northern area of the Afon Dysynni catchment is partly within the Cadair Idris SAC, while the coastal area of the catchment falls within the Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau SAC. The catchment is mainly rural and includes the Cadair Idris National Nature Reserve and parts of the Dyfi Forest<sup>4</sup>. The main land use in the upland catchment area is sheep grazing; there are also extensive areas of conifer and mixed plantations on the valley sides, along with valued bands of broadleaved woodland.

The narrow valley of the Dysynni and its tributaries takes the form of a classic U-shape with steep valley sides. The catchment is underlain by bedrock of Ordovician mudstones, sandstones and siltstones intermixed with volcanic intrusions, including the high crag of Craig yr Aderyn (Bird's Rock) SSSI, and there is extensive evidence of glacial deposition and action.

In the latest update of NRW Meirionnydd Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS), the Afon Dysynni is shown as having water available<sup>5</sup>.

#### ***B.2.1.2 Baseline Data Availability***

Continuous monitoring is undertaken by Welsh Water to monitor its operations at the Fathew and Braich y Rhiw abstraction intakes, which supply the only water treatment works in the WRZ, Penybont WTW located at Brynchrug.

- Daily abstractions from Brynchrug intake, Afon Fathew: 2000 to present
- Daily abstractions from Braich y Rhiw intake, Nant Braich y Rhiw: 2000 to present
- Daily stream flows in the Nant Braich y Rhiw: 2004 to present.

In addition, NRW operates a flow gauge at Pont y Garth weir on Afon Dysynni, some 0.5km

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<sup>3</sup> Snowdonia National Park Landscape Character Area, Dyffryn Dysynni, Available at [www.eryri-npa.gov.uk](http://www.eryri-npa.gov.uk), Accessed 4 March 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Environment Agency (2008), Dysynni Salmon Action Plan, Available at [www.cpwf.co.uk](http://www.cpwf.co.uk), Accessed 28 January 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Natural Resources Wales (2015) Meirionnydd Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy, Available at <https://www.naturalresources.wales/water/resources/catchment-abstraction-management-strategies-cams/?lang=en>, Accessed 4 March 2016.

downstream of the proposed temporary abstraction at the NRW depot and approximately 6.7km upstream of the confluence with Afon Fathew:

- Daily Pont y Garth weir river flow data, 1966 to present.

The reference conditions of the Afon Dysynni catchment are summarised below, based on the available hydrological data as listed above.

### **B.2.1.3 Hydrology**

#### Afon Dysynni at Pont y Garth

Natural Resources Wales continuously monitor river flow on the Afon Dysynni at the Pont y Garth flow gauging station (NGR: SH631066) which is 6.6km upstream of the confluence with the Afon Fathew, at an altitude of 2.3m AOD. The available flow record extends from 1966 to 2018, however data from the period August 2014 onwards has been excluded from the analysis as gravel accumulation has affected the accuracy of the rating. Note also that the location of the gauging station was moved 50m downstream in 1997, and there is some uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the low flow measurements. The gauge is also subject to tidal influences. However this is the best available flow record for the Afon Dysynni at the present time.

A summary of the daily flow record is given in **Table B2.2** below.

**Table B2.2 Summary of Recorded Mean, Maximum and Minimum Daily Flow in the Afon Dysynni at Pont y Garth Gauging Station (1966 – July 2014)**

Percentage of time river flow equalled or exceeded	Mean daily flow Ml/d, per month												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	All year
Maximum flow	4873.0	3602.9	5943.5	2383.8	3501.8	5581.4	3215.8	4149.8	3706.6	8424.9	5790.5	4359.7	8424.9
10% (high flow)	1037.3	831.5	756.8	537.3	403.1	447.1	501.2	616.9	756.1	1064.8	1138.8	1137.9	834.0
50%	433.1	324.0	253.3	195.4	143.3	123.6	141.7	197.6	231.3	365.7	460.1	467.4	251.4
80%	218.4	165.9	142.3	102.4	75.7	62.5	72.0	82.7	104.9	172.5	246.1	222.0	112.9
90%	151.0	124.7	108.9	78.9	57.8	49.3	52.0	51.8	78.6	121.5	181.9	163.0	76.4
95% (low flow)	108.5	98.3	86.4	56.1	47.3	41.6	36.4	33.6	57.1	87.2	145.7	128.7	55.4
99% (extreme low flow)	65.8	72.2	61.5	39.7	25.3	31.5	24.3	23.3	39.1	33.7	86.3	99.9	30.1
Minimum flow	46.7	36.3	20.3	26.6	23.9	25.5	20.5	18.5	16.0	28.8	73.8	79.3	16.0

The low flow statistics for the summer period (1st April to 30th September inclusive) are: Summer Q<sub>95</sub> = 43.6Ml/d; Summer Q<sub>99</sub> = 25.8Ml/d.

## B.2.2 Hydrological Impact

### B.2.2.1 Hydrological Zone of Influence

The study area includes part of the Afon Dysynni, comprising one distinct hydrological reach, as listed in **Table B2.2** and identified on **Figure B1.1**:

- Reach 1 is the Afon Dysynni, from the potential temporary intake location in the vicinity of the NRW depot near Pont y Garth to the confluence with the Afon Fathew.

The potential hydrological impacts of the drought permit option have been assessed for the single river reach, as summarised in **Table B2.2** at the end of this section.

The details of the assessment for each reach are presented below.

### B.2.2.2 Hydrological Impact Assessment

#### Reach 1 – Afon Dysynni (Intake at NRW depot to the Afon Fathew confluence)

Flows in Reach 1 are measured at the Pont y Garth gauging station, located 0.5km from the top of the reach at the proposed temporary intake location.

A temporary abstraction of 1.0Ml/d from the Afon Dysynni in the vicinity of the NRW depot would represent a 2.3% reduction in summer low flows ( $Q_{95}$ ) and a 3.9% reduction in summer extreme low flows ( $Q_{99}$ ). The hydrological impact of this drought permit option on Reach 1 is, therefore, considered to be **negligible**.

Downstream of Ponty Garth, further flow accretion would increase flows in Afon Dysynni such that the flow reduction of 1.0Ml/d would be a progressively smaller percentage of low and extreme low summer flows. Hydrological impacts downstream of the Afon Fathew confluence have therefore also been assessed as negligible, and the remainder of the river down to the tidal limit north of Tywyn has been excluded from the assessment.

### B.2.2.3 Hydrological Impact Summary

One river reach has been considered for which the assessed hydrological impacts are **negligible**. The impacted reach is shown in **Table B2.2** and establishes the full in-channel zone of influence of the drought permit for environmental sensitivity screening (see **Figure B1.1**).

**Table B2.2 Hydrological Reaches Identified in the Study Area**

Hydrological Reach	Reach boundary		Reach length	% flow reduction		Hydrological Impact
	Upstream	Downstream		Summer $Q_{95}$	Summer $Q_{99}$	
1 Afon Dy synni	Potential temporary intake at NRW Depot	Afon Fathew Confluence	7.2km	2.3%	3.9%	<b>Negligible</b>

### **B3 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT**

Given that there is no adverse hydrological impact associated with the drought permit, effects on geomorphology and water quality are equally assessed as **negligible**. Similarly, there would be no flow pressures or water quality pressures that would pose an increased risk to any water-dependent environmental features within the vicinity of the Afon Dysynni.

## **B4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IMPACT SUMMARY**

Potential impacts on the physical environment associated with the Afon Dysynni drought permit are summarised in **Table B4.1**.

**Table B4.1 Summary of Potential Changes to the Physical Environment of the Impacted Reaches from Implementation of Afon Dysynni Temporary Abstraction and Tankering Drought Permit**

<b>Afon Dysynni (Reach 1)</b>	
Flows in the River Dysynni <i>Negligible impacts during the summer / early autumn period</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduction of up to 3.9% in river flow, with negligible impacts on wetted width / wetted depth of river channel</li></ul>

## **B5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

The focus of this EAR is the Afon Dysynni drought permit. The assessment, as described in previous sections, has considered how the proposed drought permit may affect the environment in combination with the effects of existing licences and consents. In accordance with the DPG, the assessment also considers the potential cumulative effects of Welsh Water implementing other drought permits / orders within a similar timeframe. The potential for options to act in combination is set out in **Table B5.1**.

Consideration has also been given to the potential for cumulative impacts of drought options implemented by neighbouring water companies (see **Table B5.1**). The assessment of the potential for cumulative impacts of Welsh Water’s supply side and drought permit / order options with drought options listed in neighbouring water companies’ drought plans has also been undertaken as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Welsh Water’s Draft Statutory Drought Plan. The SEA was informed by the most recent information available on the neighbouring water companies’ drought plans.

**Table B5.1 Cumulative Impacts of the Afon Dysynni Drought Permit with other Drought Options**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Potential In-combination Impacts</b>	<b>Further Consideration Required (Yes/No)</b>
Welsh Water - other drought options in the Tywyn Aberdyfi WRZ / Afon Dysynni catchment	N/A	N/A
Natural Resources Wales - Drought Order/Permit options in the Dysynni catchment	No in-combination effects are anticipated at this time but this will be reviewed at the time of any drought permit application.	No